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Monthly
Film Review

July

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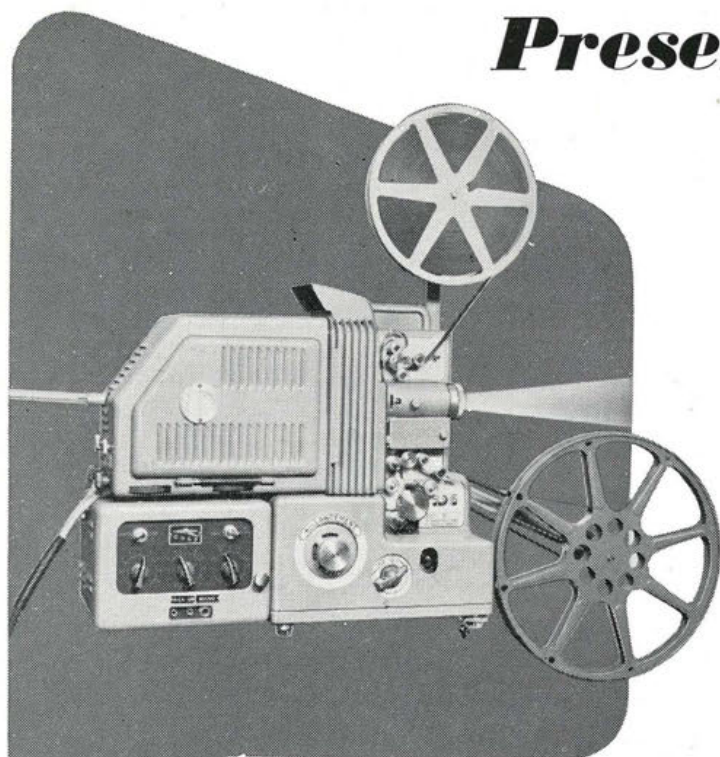
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EDITORIAL AND PUBLISHING OFFICES: British Film Institute, 164 Shaftesbury Avenue, W.C.2. (Temple Bar 1642.)

SIGHT AND SOUND is sent free every month to members of the Institute: annual subscription rate (12 issues) 21s. including postage.

EDITOR: Gavin Lambert

PRINTED BY M^cCorquodale, London, S.E.

BLOCKS BY W. F. Sedgwick, Ltd., London

ADVERTISING OFFICES: Husey & Co., 92 Fleet Street, E.C.4. (Central 8209.)

SIGHT AND SOUND'S GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Brief pointers to the principal films showing in British cinemas during July. Last-minute changes of programme after our press-date may cause one or two inaccuracies (chiefly in the London area) but we hope this list may serve as a useful general guide. Films with an asterisk are particularly recommended.

ADIEU LEONARD (*Film Traders*). Slight, pleasant extravaganza about a wealthy simpleton and a downtrodden little husband employed to murder him. Characteristic Prevert wit and fantasy. (Carette, Charles Trenet, Pierre Brasseur: director, Pierre Prevert.)

AMBUSH (*M.G.M.*) A dare-devil army scout leads a mission to capture an Indian chief who is holding a white woman hostage. Medium western. (Robert Taylor, John Hodiak: director, Sam Wood.)

ANNIE GET YOUR GUN (*M.G.M.*) Uninspired Technicolor version of the pleasing Irving Berlin musical. (Betty Hutton, Howard Keel: director, George Sidney.)

CAPTURE, The (*R.K.O.*) Drama of a man in Mexico on the run from the police and his conscience. Phoney stuff. (Lew Ayres, Teresa Wright: director, John Sturges.)

CAIRO ROAD (*A.B. Pathe*). Dope smugglers versus the Egyptian police: average, British-made thriller. (Eric Portman, Maria Mauban: director, David Macdonald.)

CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN (*Fox*). Clifton Webb as an industrial efficiency expert who organises his family of twelve in the same way as his business. Inferior imitation of *Life with Father*. (Myrna Loy, Jeanne Crain: director, Walter Lang.)

DANCE HALL (*G.F.D.*) The latest Ealing picture is the story of four girl factory workers who spend their evenings at the local Palais. Dance hall settings not handled with sufficient imagination to compensate for weaknesses in the plot. (Natasha Parry, Diana Dors, Bonar Colleano: director, Charles Crichton.)

***DIVIDING LINE, The** (*Paramount*). A study of mob-feeling in a small Californian town, culminating in the attempted lynching of a Spanish-American boy. A little slow in starting, but absorbingly presented and honest in feeling. (Macdonald Carey, Gail Russell: director, Joseph Losey.)

EAST SIDE, WEST SIDE (*M.G.M.*) Leisurely account of the emotional tangles of New York socialites: commonplace, but accomplished in presentation and acting. (Barbara Stanwyck, Van Heflin, James Mason: director, Mervyn Leroy.)

FATHER OF THE BRIDE (*M.G.M.*) Pleasant, skilful light comedy about the excitements of a small-town marriage. (Spencer Tracy, Joan Bennett, Elizabeth Taylor: director, Vincente Minnelli.)

ICHABOD AND MR. TOAD (*R.K.O.*) Disney's versions of *The Wind in the Willows* and *The Headless Horseman*: mechanical efficiency unflawed but (apart from characterisation of Mr. Toad) inspiration noticeably flagging.

IN A LONELY PLACE (*Columbia*). The love affair of a Hollywood scriptwriter and a girl in the shadow of a murder case. Fair. (Gloria Grahame, Humphrey Bogart: director, Nicholas Ray.)

IN THE NAME OF THE LAW (*G.C.T.*) The new magistrate in a Sicilian town rescues the district from the Mafia: slow, rather tedious Italian adventure story. (Massimo Girotti, Charles Vanel: director, Pietro Germi.)

***KIND HEARTS AND CORONETS** (*G.F.D.*) Revival of Robert Hamer's elegant though rather fierce comedy of an Edwardian gentleman who tries to murder his way to a peerage. (Dennis Price, Alec Guinness, Joan Greenwood, Valerie Hobson.)

***LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN** (*Eros*). A touching and delicate romantic story, set in Vienna of the 1900's of the lost love of a young girl for a pianist. (Joan Fontaine, Louis Jourdan: director, Max Ophuls.)

MOVIE CRAZY (*Monarch*). Reissue of a 1932 Harold Lloyd comedy: good moments, but as a whole disappointing, with silent comedy technique not adapted to the demands of sound. (Constance Cummings: director, Clyde Brickman.)

NIGHT AND THE CITY (*Fox*). Jules Dassin thriller, made in London, about the efforts of a small-time spiv to control wrestling promotion. Cut-to-pattern violence with some erratic location work. (Richard Widmark, Gene Tierney, Googie Withers.)

NO SAD SONGS FOR ME (*Columbia*). The intriguing Margaret Sullivan returns in a restrained drama of a woman who discovers she has incurable cancer. (Wendell Corey, Viveca Lindfors: director, Rudolph Mate.)

ODETTE (*British Lion*). Sincerely intentioned but imaginatively inadequate tribute to Odette Churchill, a heroine of the war. (Anna Neagle, Trevor Howard: director, Herbert Wilcox.)

***ORPHEE** (*Films de France*). Cocteau's modern re-telling of the Orphic myth, and his masterpiece. Very fascinating. (Jean Marais, Maria Casares, Francois Perier.)

RUY BLAS (*Films de France*). A grandiose adaptation (by Cocteau) of Victor Hugo's romantic barnstormer, very indifferently handled. (Jean Marais, Danielle Darrieux: director, Pierre Billon.)

SIDE STREET (*M.G.M.*) A young postman inadvertently acquires a gang of blackmailers' loot. Routine melodrama, except for an exciting car chase on New York locations. Farley Granger, Cathy O'Donnell: director, Anthony Mann.)

SO LONG AT THE FAIR (*G.F.D.*) The fascinating story of a young Englishman's disappearance from his Paris hotel on the eve of the 1885 Exhibition: made with care but without imagination. (Jean Simmons, Dirk Bogarde: directors, Terence Fisher and Antony Darnborough.)

TOO DANGEROUS TO LOVE (*Warner*). A man and a woman meet on a murder jury, and the progress of their growing love is bound up with that of the trial. Static, talkative, but with some good writing. (Ginger Rogers, Dennis Morgan: director, Bretaigne Windust.)

***TOP HAT** (*R.K.O.*) Welcome re-issue of one of the best Astaire-Rogers pictures. (director, Mark Sandrich, 1935.)

TREASURE ISLAND (*R.K.O.*) Disney-produced (colour and live action) version of the Stevenson story. Competently staged but lacking the true spirit of adventure. (Bobby Driscoll, Robert Newton: director, Byron Haskin.)

Sight & Sound

Published by the British Film Institute

VOLUME 19 (New Series) No. 5

JULY 1950

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ON THE COVER: Gus the Mouse in Disney's forthcoming *Cinderella* (see page 197)

The full page still on page 191 is from *Orphée*.

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The Front Page

Children and the Cinema

THE RECENTLY PUBLISHED Report of the Departmental Committee set up in 1947 to investigate *Children and the Cinema*, both alleviates and expresses the widespread alarm at the cinema's pervasive influence. Films are absolved of responsibility for juvenile delinquency and for poor health—with some reservations as to their possible but unascertainable psychological effects—but the major problem of the influences to which children are exposed in the cinema remains.

Nine out of ten children of school age visit the cinema from time to time; more than half of them go as often as once a week, and a considerable proportion twice a week or even more often. An L.C.C. survey of 14,500 children, made in 1948, is quoted as stating that 31 per cent. of children between 8 and 14 visit the cinema at least twice a week, and that 12 per cent. of children under 5 go once a week. In face of these figures, it is clear that "both in urban and rural areas the largest single leisure-time occupation among all the children . . . was that of attending the cinema". This is a fact which, whether regarded with approval or disapproval, must be accepted. The Committee's Report suggests steps which would as far as possible safeguard children, both in what they see, and the conditions in which they see it. The Report covers both ordinary programmes, and special children's programmes.

The admission of children to cinemas is at present dependent upon a censorship qualification which has, the Report states, broken down. For various reasons—because they cannot be left at home, because 'U' films are unavailable, because their 'parent or guardian' may be a stranger picked up outside the cinema—children are no longer prevented from seeing unsuitable 'A' films. The Report recommends that a Central Committee on Children and the Cinema should be set up, one of whose duties would be the classification of films under four headings: "X" (adults only), "C" (films for showing at children's exhibitions), and "Advisory U" (family entertainment) and "Advisory A" (preferably for adults). The Report also recommends that children under 7 should not be admitted to an ordinary cinema unless accompanied by parent or guardian, that children under 5, whether or not accompanied, should not be admitted to children's shows, and that no unaccompanied child under 12 should be allowed to remain in a cinema after 8 p.m.

Perhaps still more important is the whole question of children's matinees. These, it was found, were regarded by many children rather as supplementary to their normal film going than as a substitute. About three-quarters of a million children attend these shows, usually held on Saturday morning, and neither their parents nor their teachers have very much idea of the type of entertainment provided. As a whole, the organisers of these programmes suffer from a deplorable

shortage of the right type of film. Programmes contain a high proportion of second feature Westerns of the poorest possible quality, and of American serials which, although made for children, are, as a rule, violent and frightening thrillers. The exception is the work of the Rank Organisation's Children's Entertainment Films (under Mary Field's leadership) whose films—for the most part open-air adventure stories with children in the leading parts—are ideally suited to their purpose.

Picture Post, in a recent feature, showed children cowering in their seats, hiding their eyes from the screen, and generally showing every sign of terror. This was clearly intended as sensationalism—obviously these children were not frightened for more than a few moments, and many others probably showed no signs of fright at all. There is, after all, no compulsion on children to attend these shows. But the fact that a child is not necessarily in a continual state of panic throughout the programme does not make the programmes any more satisfactory, and it is important that films should be made specifically for this large audience, rather than that they should be presented with a debased form of adult entertainment.

The Report, besides recommending the provision of more suitable films, suggests various improvements in the running of these clubs. In some, the cinema programme is only one activity, and cricket and football matches, stamp collecting and so on are encouraged. This is regarded as reasonable, but the Report is less approving of the collective Club Promise, a special feature of the Odeon clubs. The main suggestion, however, is that cinema managers should co-operate to a greater extent with local authorities responsible for children's welfare.

It is especially sad, in view of the shortage of children's films, to have to report that Mr. Rank has decided to bring to an end his production of these films, as a necessary economy measure. They are, of course, a luxury to make, and it is difficult to see what other decision he could have taken. The Report, while praising the excellence of these films, and advising the production of others, makes no sort of practical suggestion as to who is to finance them. Film producers are not and cannot be philanthropists, and a more practical approach to this problem might have saved children's film production before the present halt had to be called.

If the recommendations of the Report are carried out, the interests of the cinema as a whole, as well as those of child audiences, will be served. There is nothing in the Report to suggest that film going will cease to be a family habit, but one would like to think that the new categories, if adopted, might encourage producers to make more adult pictures, with the stigma of the old "H" removed. But this is by no means a foregone conclusion. It is equally probable that most would take care to keep their product within the "Advisory A" category for commercial reasons—the equivalent of the present "A". On the other hand, an indisputable advantage of the "X" certificate would be to end the present mutilations of continental films (such as *Le diable au corps* and *Les amants de Vérone*) to meet the demands of the present "A".

One aspect of the Report which seems generally to have been overlooked is the extent to which the proposed Central Committee would take over the functions of the Board of Film Censors. Although the Report expressly states that the Board will not be superseded, it is difficult in practice to see how can this be wholly avoided. At present the Board passes films as fit for public exhibition, and classifies them. If the Report's recommendation is carried out, the Board will

continue to veto the few films considered unfit to be shown, but the whole task of classification will be carried out by the Committee. This would be a most significant change.

In all of this there is no suggestion that children should not go to the cinema. "Encourage children to go to the cinema", in the words of Dilys Powell, "rather than keep them back from it. If you go to the cinema looking at the right things, there are wonderful things to be got from it. There are bad things if you look badly, but there are good things if you look well". The Report suggests how children could be taught to look well.

The Two *Stromboli's*

The *Stromboli* affair is a rather baffling one. Rossellini has disclaimed the version of his film distributed in this country and America by R.K.O. on the grounds that it distorts his original conception. He even arranged, by proxy, a private viewing of the original *Stromboli* in London. This suggests that he takes the film seriously. But after seeing it, one can say without hesitation that *Stromboli* in either version is an unusually bad film—possibly the worst film that a director of such status has ever made independently, of his own choice and will, as opposed to a necessary assignment. Its story of a Lithuanian D.P. who marries a Strombolian fisherman to escape from her camp, finds life on the bleak, volcanic island dull, vamps first the priest and then a lighthouse keeper and, running away in desperation, is spiritually purged by the majesty of the erupting volcano, was obviously never properly scripted: it proceeds in a series of uncomfortably improvised episodes, unconvincing and inconsistent, the style is slow and aimless, the characterisation non-existent. Rossellini's version lasts 105 minutes. As for the 'changed' ending, Rossellini ambiguously leaves his heroine apostrophising God on the volcano slope and determined to live for her unborn child, while R.K.O. have resolved this into an off-screen return to her husband. Apart from that, they have shortened the film slightly—without touching the only sequence of any note, a tuna-fishing expedition—which cannot but be regarded as a slight improvement.

What is one to make of all this? For Rossellini the film is clearly a resounding mistake: admittedly the camera in *The Miracle* was as infatuated with Magnani as it is with Bergman in *Stromboli*, and had no more will of its own—but *The Miracle*, though it may be considered a failure, was not a disaster. Neither is Bergman's inferiority to Magnani as an actress a sufficient explanation. It has been suggested that Rossellini's repudiation of R.K.O.'s *Stromboli* is an attempt at face-saving, but this seems very unlikely: more probably, it is the outcome of self-deception, heightened by personal involvements. Rossellini's impromptu approach to film-making worked well with the stimulus of actuality behind it and a team of gifted players. But film-making reduced to an exclusive partnership between director and actress needs altogether more care and substance.

British Film Academy Awards

After the various broadsides on Oscars in our last number, it is pleasant to report that the British Film Academy awards last month fully justified themselves, and represented an altogether superior and more balanced body of judgment. These were the awards: *Bicycle Thieves* (best film from any country), *The Third Man* (best British film), *The Search* (United Nations award), *Daybreak in Udi* (best documentary) and, a welcome act of discernment, *La Famille Martin* (best specialised subject).



INTERVIEW

WITH OPHULS

Francis Koval



MEETING MAX OPHÜLS AGAIN, twenty-five years seem obliterated in a whiff and the exciting atmosphere of the 'twenties, with their errors and enthusiasms, is recaptured. Despite the greying temples, he is, in his 47th year, as youthful and as lively as he might have been on that day when, at the age of 18, he defiantly refused to accept a crown-princely position in his father's department store in Saarbrücken and ran away from home to become an actor.

Listening to the tale of his eventful career is like sitting in that fake train-compartment in his *Letter From An Unknown Woman* and watching the romantic scenery rolling past the window. The only difference is that the painted back-cloth suddenly becomes alive with the colour and life-blood of genuine adventure.

Max Ophüls possesses the rare quality of understanding people not only intellectually but emotionally, of listening to them and absorbing their ideas in a way that makes them immediately feel "at home". And this includes all kinds of people: from the practically minded studio carpenter to the sophisticated scriptwriter or the self-important production magnate. This is a clue to his success in half a dozen different countries. In each of them he arrived as a stranger, lonely and forlorn, but when circumstances forced him to continue his pilgrimage, he left behind everywhere genuine friends and admirers.

The element of human warmth and absolute sincerity is striking, both in his work and in his talk.

"Why I wanted to become an actor?—It's simple" he says. "Apart from the fascination of all the classical plays which I regularly watched from 'the gods' of our Saarbrücken Stadt-Theater, my imagination was fired by the crowds of young girls waiting at the stage door every night. I might have

achieved this ambition in my young days in Aachen and Dortmund, but I am afraid that I have never been a really good actor. That is why I became a director.

"I never played very important parts. Just what the others left for me. The Dauphin in Shaw's *St. Joan* was my favourite part in my acting days, but only later, when I produced the play in Berlin, I discovered how much better it could be played.

"But I really became a producer by accident. One night I flopped so terribly in a dramatic part that the next day the Manager of the Dortmund Theatre summoned me to his office. As I was paid for playing both comic and dramatic roles, he told me, I would have to take a 50 per cent. salary cut. To soothe my indignation he hesitantly suggested an alternative. I could stop playing altogether and become a *Regisseur*, a director, keeping my original salary. My actor's pride was deeply insulted—but a few days later I accepted".

To justify the acceptance to himself, he argued at the time that in his new position he would make actors play their parts exactly the way he himself would have played them. "So through the actor I'll prove that really and truly I should have played the part myself and that I am a much better actor than anybody had thought . . .". But he had not the slightest inkling then that within the next ten years he would produce something like 180 stage plays.

Quick as he is to announce his failures with a humorous twinkle, he passes over his successes with a few hasty remarks. The fact, however, is that they were outstanding and numerous.

The most explicit proof of the quality of his productions was supplied by a sensational offer from the Vienna Burg-Theater to engage him on a long-term contract at a high salary. To appreciate this, one has to remember the old

dignified tradition of the Burg-Theater, where everything was time-honoured and the most youthful actors in their fifties. In the long history of this world-famous theatre there had never been a director aged 23—except Max Ophuls.

His comment on the appointment was:

"All through the time in Vienna I felt like a passenger in a fast elevator: dizzy!—Fate had plunked me down in a magnificent gilt rococo carriage drawn by four matched horses—while what I really wanted was to ride on a motor-cycle".

The longing for a break with convention drove him back to Germany. In Frankfurt, Breslau and finally Berlin he found a wide field for his talent. His deeply rooted sense of social obligation led him to a purposeful hobby: in his leisure time he visited prisons and played or recited to the inmates. The rapidly spreading net of broadcasting gave him a new outlet, and soon not only his name but also his voice became familiar over the air.

But up to the beginning of the 'thirties Max Ophuls, who had always been in love with the theatre, used to look upon the cinema (excepting only Charlie Chaplin) as a cheap fair-ground attraction, and despised it all the more for being a dangerous rival to the live stage.

The first "talkie" he saw, with bad and hardly intelligible dialogue, made the first breach in his armour of indifference. He saw great possibilities in the proper use of the sound-track and conceived a vague idea that one day he might try to make a picture.

Significantly enough, he began his work in this new field by becoming a dialogue director for Anatol Litvak, whose poor German was as little understood by the UFA actors as his native Russian. The film was called *No More Love*. Max Ophuls' way of dealing with actors must have impressed the UFA executives. They suggested to him the production of a 40-minute featurette and offered him the freedom of their script-library. The result was a delightful little comedy called *Dannschon Lieber Lebertran* (*Codliver-Oil Preferred*).

The author of the original story was the German poet Erich Kaestner (author of *Emil and the Detectives*), while the shooting-script was written by the same Emeric Pressburger who to-day heads the "Archers" with Michael Powell. The picture was given a cautious trial run in a suburban cinema: the public's reaction was such that after two days it was transferred to the biggest UFA theatre in the west end of Berlin.

This long forgotten miniature triumph marks the birth of Max Ophuls, the film-maker.

In *The Bartered Bride* which followed, the newly established director had not only the great advantage of employing the opera star, Jarmilla Nowotná (to-day at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, and also the mother in *The Search*) but also of the greatest possible freedom of action. He caused quite a stir by building a whole Czech village among the hills of Geiseltal and by engaging real fairground people and local inhabitants to act in the film. As the finished work turned out a success and not just another "filmed opera" his prestige increased accordingly.

While still shooting the last scenes of *The Bartered Bride* half his thoughts and all his heart were already on another subject: Schnitzler's *Liebelein*, which was to make him widely famous.

Here he proved his brilliance, his singleness of purpose and his independence. Instead of accepting the producer's over-sentimental approach and a cast-list full of box-office names, he refused to co-operate and decided to produce the picture himself.

"I saw the opportunity of making a picture with young people as yet unspoiled by stardom" he says. "Not an easy task, certainly, but fascinating. I believe that most young actors have to be steered through great dangers. Wealth, publicity, a higher standard of living—it all happens far too quickly. The shyness and reserve that constitute the appeal of youth, are easily lost . . .".

To eliminate these dangers he sent Wolfgang Liebeneiner,

"Edwige Feuillère is a great actress . . ." Two studies from *Sans Lendemain*.





"The Reckless Moment", Ophuls' last American film.
Joan Bennett and James Mason.

then an almost unknown actor (and now a film director in Germany) for three months to a lonely place in the mountains and made him promise to keep his assignment a secret. Despite the grumbles of the business manager, who disliked "paying for an actor's holiday", the experiment proved more than successful.

An experiment with the feminine parts was still less orthodox and more daring. Magda Schneider, a gay and popular musical-comedy star, seemed to envy slightly Luise Ulrich for her semi-tragic role, while the latter proved to be naturally light-hearted by temperament. Following a sudden inspiration Max Ophuls made them exchange parts; and the result was startlingly successful.

Another minor sensation was the fact that a number of secondary parts were played by top-stars, including Gustav Grundgens and Olga Tshekowa. "They did it for Schnitzler's sake"—is the director's modest comment. It is only a fair guess that his own personality must have had something to do with it.

So well prepared was the picture that shooting was completed in less than four weeks. Once it was screened there were many who said it would become a "classic".

All this happened in 1932. A year later, the advent of the Third Reich forced Max Ophuls to abandon his work and Germany. He had never denied his Jewish faith, and his friends knew very well that he had changed his name from Oppenheimer for one reason only: in order not to "disgrace" his Saarbruecken family through his acting career.

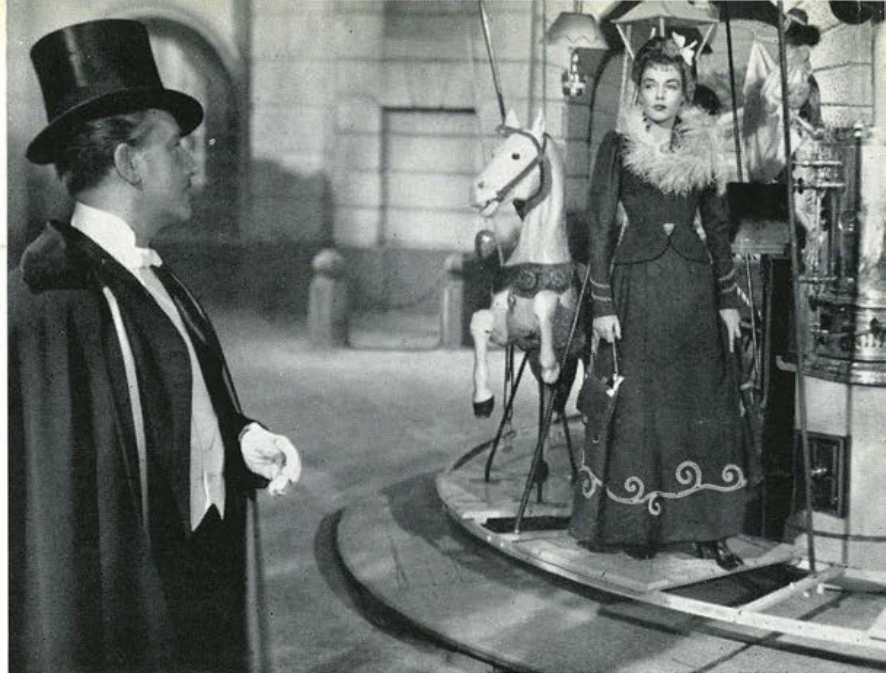
Max Ophuls went to Paris, but the fame of *Liebelei* had preceded him. Soon an independent company was formed with the one and only aim of making a French version of it. Most of the principal actors came to Paris for the purpose, disregarding possible Nazi reprisals and not even first asking how much they would be paid.

This was a good start to a series of films made in France, which their maker himself assesses as follows:

On a Volé un Homme.—"A pot-boiler. Not my cup of tea"! *Divine* (Script by Colette).—"My biggest flop".

La Tendre Ennemie.—"It was awarded the Prix Lumière and one French paper called it 'René Clair without snobbery'. But many people dislike me for it".

Yoshiwara (a Maurice Dekobra story).—"The Japanese Sessue Hayakawa and his wife-to-be speaking broken French.



Anton Walbrook and Simone Signoret in "La Ronde".

Very international".

Sans Lendemain.—"I have never yet seen an uncut version of the picture. And what I was not allowed to show was precisely what I liked best of all. Edwige Feuillère is a great actress!"

In between those Max Ophuls made one film in Holland, *The Comedy of Gold*, put Isa Miranda on the screen in *La Signora di Tutti*, shot in Rome, and accepted an invitation to Soviet Russia on condition that he would only sign a two-year contract if he liked the country. After two months stay he returned to Paris.

He was just shooting the last scene of *From Mayerling to Sarajevo*, that graceful historical film with Edwige Feuillère, with a remarkable closing sequence of the assassination at Sarajevo, when most of his technicians put on uniforms and went off to the Maginot Line. Very soon he was drafted into the French Army too—as a private.

It was a long and very adventurous road that led him from the French battlefields of 1940 to the United States. One of the tragic stops on his way was the Zurich Theatre, where he produced some Shakespeare plays. He could have stayed on if he had satisfied the Swiss police by signing a declaration that he was a French deserter. . . .

"America certainly was not as I had imagined it, and for quite a time I was very depressed", he confesses. "Some people turned my head with easy promises, but for three years or so I was completely idle. I couldn't quite understand the workings of Hollywood machinery, till one day a big-time executive said to me with a friendly pat on the shoulder: 'Our studios are producing a lot of cheaply made money-spinners just now: thrillers, Westerns and so on. But one day the Board of Directors may decide to embark on Quality Production. That is when we shall need you'. His words were true, which meant that waiting for my chance I might well starve.

"But my chance came unexpectedly, when Preston Sturges one day by accident came across *Liebelei* and rediscovered me. I was first assigned to the scripting of Prosper Merimée's *Colomba* for Howard Hughes (a picture unfinished yet, as far as I know), then worked for Douglas Fairbanks on *The Exile*. Then I made *Letter From An Unknown Woman* for

(Continued on page 221)

News from . . .

PARIS

LONDON HAS ENJOYED the unusual advantage of seeing **Jean Cocteau's** *Orphée* several months ahead of the Paris release. This welcome sign of a changing policy awakens the hope that quite a few of those pictures at present the major attractions in the French capital will be screened in London during the coming season. One thinks particularly of **Rene Clair's** *La beauté du diable*, which after a run of more than three months still draws long queues to the Madeleine cinema.

Another film that has caused considerable discussion, particularly among St. Germain des Près intellectuals, is the screen version of Cocteau's famous novel *Les enfants terribles*. It was shot in cleverly contrived makeshift decors in the "Populaire" building, and on the stage of the "Théâtre Pigalle" at the same time as Cocteau was busy on his *Orphée*. Cocteau entrusted both direction and production to the up-and-coming **Jean-Pierre Melville**, on the strength of his first independently produced film *Le Silence de la Mer*. (Melville, by the way, played the small part of a hotel manager in *Orphée*.) The leading players in *Les enfants terribles*, **Nicole Stéphane** (a remarkable actress, first seen in *Le silence de la mer*) and **Edouard Dermithe** (Cégeste in *Orphée*), fight bravely against the serious handicap of having to impersonate teenagers. In spite of this, the eerie atmosphere of the "Chambre"—the inner sanctum of adolescent rites and a unique, disquieting brother-sister relationship—comes at times authentically to life. Obviously the film has little appeal to the general public. Its adversaries protest that it is an unsuccessful attempt to translate a literary work into screen language, and point to the use of Cocteau's commenting voice as proof of a dramatic failure; and the general tone is frigid and episodic.



Work in progress on one of the dream sequences in "Ballerina".



"Les enfants terribles": Nicole Stéphane and Edouard Dermithe (right) in the "Chambre".

Whatever its value as an experiment, the picture does not come up to the standard of *Les Parents terribles*, and still less of *Orphée*.

Since the popular success of *The Red Shoes*, ballet has gained a hold on the public everywhere, and a few French film-makers have now turned their attention to this field. The one film that will certainly reach British cinemas is **Ludwig Berger's** *Ballerina*, as it is being produced in two versions, English and French. It consists of three dream sequences, all of them basically choreographic, which are held together by a dramatic episode of the real life failure suffered by a young beginner on her first night. **Violette Verdy**, a young and promising dancer who is playing the main part, is expected to make a name for herself in this very carefully prepared picture. The music, incidentally, is derived from Mozart and Ravel. The most notable acting part is **Gabrielle Dorziat's**, who plays the ballerina's aunt.

A more melodramatic story is the framework of *La belle que voilà*, an adaptation of Vicki Baum's novel *The Career of Doris Hart*. Here **Michele Morgan** plays a ballet dancer, and **Henri Vidal** her lover. In a jealousy scene, he accidentally kills one of her admirers, and is sentenced to prison: from then on, she devotes her life to becoming a prima ballerina, less to satisfy her own ambitions than to earn enough money to lodge an appeal and free her lover. She pays no attention to her doctors' warning about a weak heart, and when she finally achieves her aim, a tragic ending is inevitable.

Michèle Morgan insisted on learning all the ballet routines and executing the dance scenes without an understudy. **Ludmilla Tcherina**, however, and **Edmond Audrand**—two professional dancers—lend a background of veracity to her performance. Unpromising as the story sounds, the film may prove to be of interest firstly on account of its cast and secondly because it has been scripted and directed by **Jean-Pierre Le Chanois**, who recently showed his talent in a film about children, *L'école buissonnière*. It is rather surprising that this charming little film has not yet been seen in London: **Bernard Blier** won an award at the Knokke Festival last year for his performance in it.

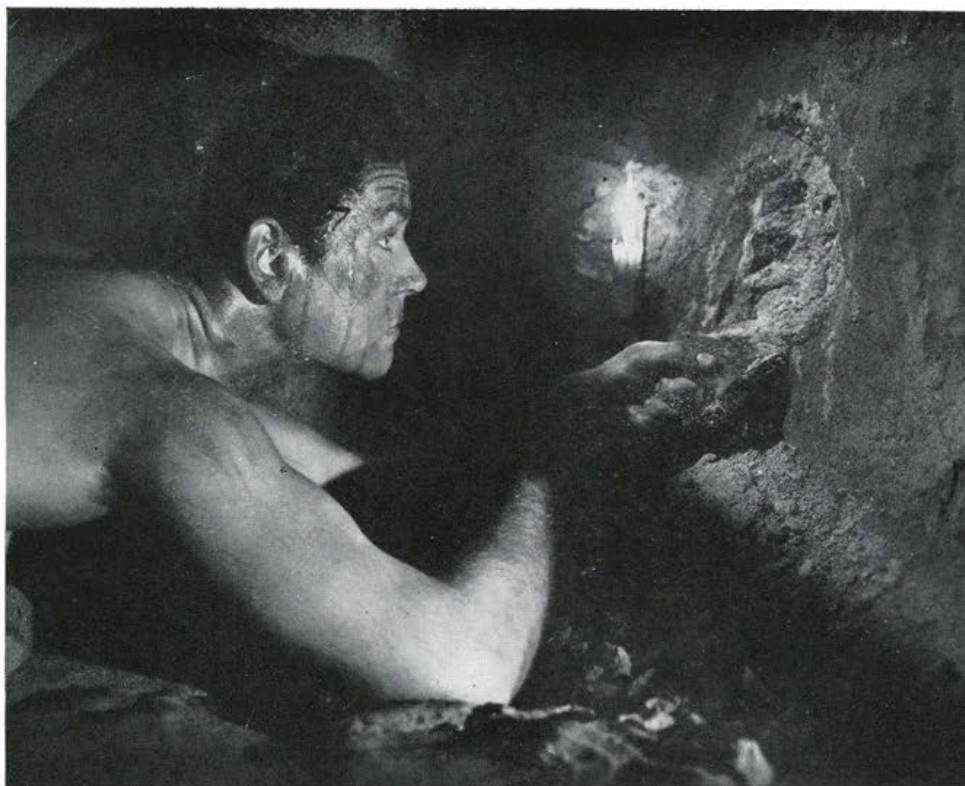
FRANCIS KOVAL.

LONDON

IN UNAVOIDABLY gloomy prognostications made a few months ago, **J. Arthur Rank** threatened to close down his production activities entirely in June, unless the situation had improved. The crisis, though temporarily out of the headlines, continues. No concession on Entertainments Tax has been granted, and the Rank Organisation does not apparently intend to call on the National Film Finance Corporation for aid. Meanwhile, **Harold Wilson** and **Eric Johnston** have had talks of which the outcome is not as yet certain: the major difficulty is that the British solution—for American companies to make more pictures here with frozen dollars—is not acceptable to producers who have to face the opposition of American Unions. It is difficult, in any event, to foresee any clearing of the horizon which might improve the production prospects of the Rank Organisation.

Although Mr. Rank has brought down the axe on *This Modern Age* and on his Children's Films Production, and by deciding not to back the next **David Lean** venture has forfeited his last director of any note, his remaining studio, Pinewood, is still in active operation. Apart from *Highly Dangerous*, an **Eric Ambler** story with **Margaret Lockwood** as an entomologist who goes behind the Iron Curtain, it is occupied by independent units: **Anthony Asquith** directs *The Woman in Question*, and **Roy Baker** the **Betty Box** production of *The Clouded Yellow*, with **Jean Simmons** and **Trevor Howard**, also scripted by Eric Ambler. Thus, in *Highly Dangerous*, Mr. Rank brings back the most enduring among the stars he created—in what, if prophecies come true, may be his swan song. It seems probable, however, that he will continue in production on the present very restricted scale.

Meanwhile, about fifteen other films are in production at the moment. The busy **Ealing Studios**, with three or four at the planning stage, are making *The Magnet* (director, **Charles Frend**), a boys' adventure story, largely on location in Lancashire. A.B.P.C. studios at Elstree have three pictures in production: the Anglo-American *Captain Hornblower* made with Warner Brothers' frozen dollars, a British thriller *The Franchise Affair*, and *Happy Go Lovely*, another instance of the *entente cordiale*, since it stars **Vera Ellen**, **David Niven** and **Cesar Romero** in an Edinburgh Festival setting. The producer is **Marcel Hellman**, the American director **Bruce Humberstone**. The Korda studios at Shepperton are also given up to Anglo-American ventures; *The Mudlark*, with **Irene Dunne**



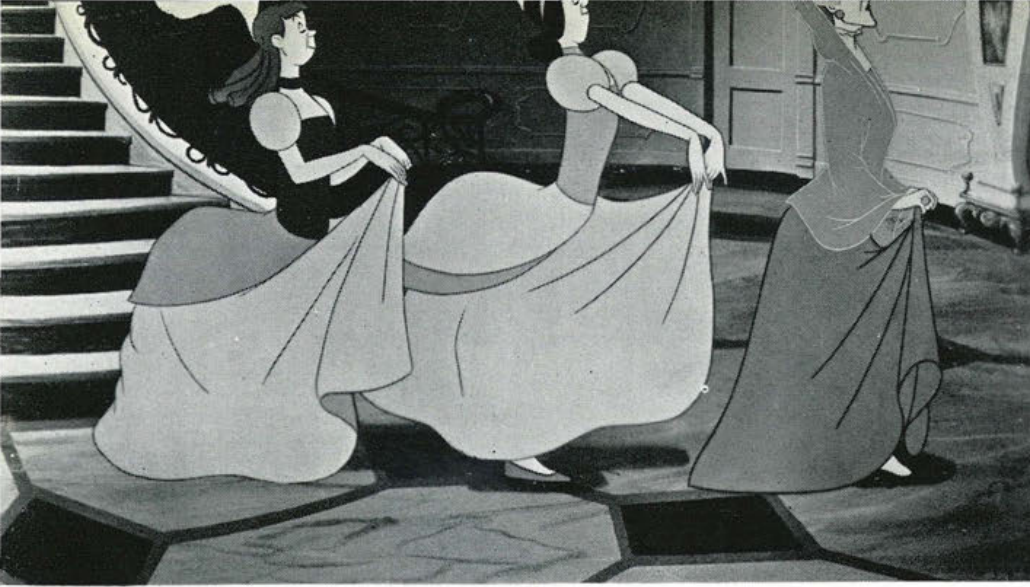
A shot from the tunnelling sequence of Jack Lee's version of the famous escape story, "The Wooden Horse." Anthony Steele.

and **Alec Guinness**, produced by **Nunnally Johnson** and directed by **Jean Negulesco** (Fox), and *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman*, with **James Mason** and **Ava Gardner**, directed by **Albert Lewin**. All British is *One Wild Oat*, a screen version of the Robertson Hare stage farce, and the activities of Nettlefold Studios, home of the undaunted producer **Daniel Angel**, who, after a series of low budget comedies and thrillers, is launching out with *Mrs. Drake's Duck*, a farcical comedy about a duck that lays a uranium egg, with **Douglas Fairbanks** and **Yolande Donlan**.

Apart from *The Late Edwina Black* (David Farrar, **Geraldine Fitzgerald**, scripted by Charles Frank and David Evans, directed by Maurice Elvey) and some second features, this completes the present production picture. It cannot be called gay, but it is slightly less grim than might have been foreseen a few months ago. More disquieting is the absence from this list of Britain's best directors—**Carol Reed**, **Thorold Dickinson**, **David Lean**, **Robert Hamer**. The latter two have had to postpone their projects announced last month, Reed has now abandoned the **Grahame Greene** story and is surveying the East Indies with an idea of making Conrad's *An Outcast of the Islands*. To some the news that **Powell** and **Pressburger** want to film Orwell's 1984 will improve prospects. Quantity may be kept up with difficulty: quality, in the uncertainties of depression, has more of a struggle to survive.

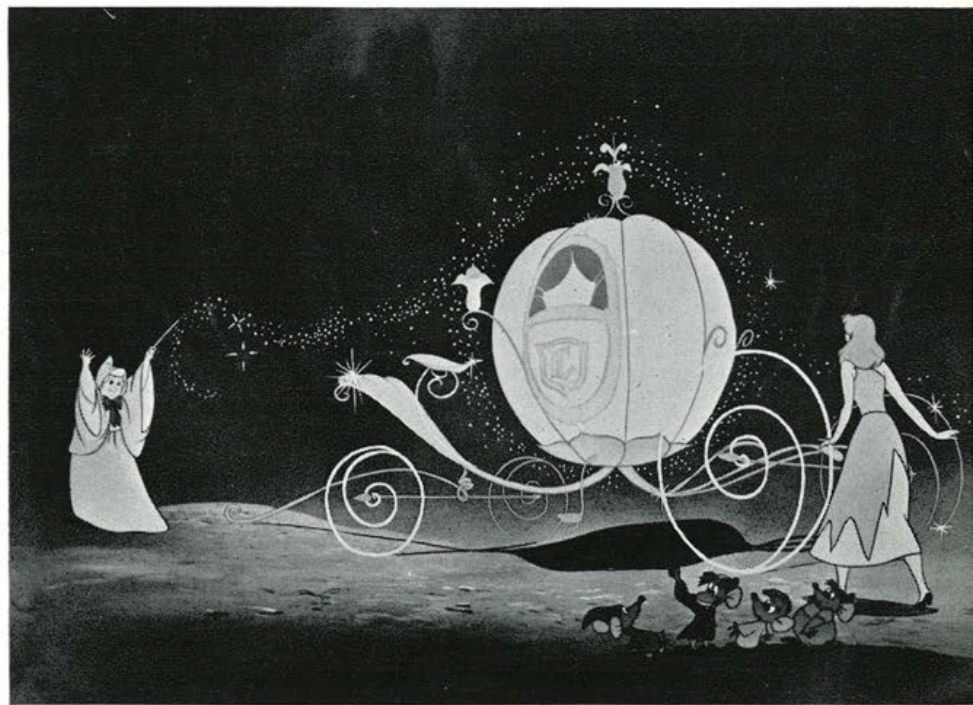
JAMES MORGAN,

HOLLYWOOD



Cinderella. Disney's latest film, to be shown in London in a few weeks, marks a return to the fairytale manner of *Snow White*. He has added to the legend a number of birds and beasts: the wicked stepmother and her two grotesque daughters are attended by Lucifer, a haughty and malevolent cat; Cinderella gets help and solace from Bruno, the affable dog, from a family of mice (notably the engagingly willing but slow-witted Gus, pictured on the cover), and a flock of bluebirds.

The stills here are of scenes on the evening of Prince Charming's ball. The wicked three prepare to leave, decked with finery: the Fairy Godmother watched by admiring mice, materialises a white coach from a pumpkin: on the stroke of midnight, Cinderella flees from the ball to her coach, pursued by the Prince's horses.



FRANCE LOOKS AT BRITISH FILMS

Jean Quével

A FEW MONTHS AGO *Cardboard Cavalier* was shown at the *Studio de l'Etoile*, one of the small, smart Paris theatres. It was the flop of the year. Then it appeared again, advertised as everybody's "must" since it was in the same vein as *Passport to Pimlico* and *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. This fantastic statement ended with a pompous introduction of Sid Field as *Le Don Quichotte Anglais*. One is left wondering what the famous comedian would have thought of this wild French overstatement. Whatever the answer, this shows, if anything, that the Paris exhibitor was trying to make money on an English film from the good name of English films generally.

From the showing of *Brief Encounter* onwards, the renown of the British cinema has been steadily increasing in France until the summer of 1949 when the films chosen for the Knokke and Venice festivals disappointed the critics' high expectations. But French cinema-goers were not affected by the critics' disappointment; and they have not yet seen most of the films involved, anyway. Also, two fortunate events took place at about the same time. One was the first prize granted to *The Third Man*, at Cannes, a reward probably well deserved, however it may reflect on the international level of film-making at the time. The second concerns *Passport to Pimlico*. This was also shown at Cannes although not competitively entered for some (to this critic) mysterious reason. It was so successful, however, that the majority of French journalists would have liked it to be crowned by the jury with the *Prix de la Critique Internationale*. Amongst some awkward confusion, the jury later decided not to consider it, since it had not been officially entered for the festival. A few weeks previously, it was going to be released by a successful Paris exhibitor who had little confidence in it as a box-office winner and who merely wanted to fill a week's gap, when by some chance it was seen by an influential French critic, George Charensol, who thought it was startlingly good and new—in fact he attributed to it in print what he called a Swift quality, obviously another example of French literary exuberance. Charensol persuaded the exhibitor to postpone its release until both holidays and festivals were over. The film has now had a clear six months' run in Paris.

One of the favourite games of French rhetorical film criticism is to compare the merits of the post-war neo-realist Italian cinema with the British documentary-influenced school. That Italian films such as *Paisa* and *Bicycle Thieves* give proof of a more sensitive use of the medium, and that they appeal more to the minds of people who have suffered occupation, black market and all their consequences, is

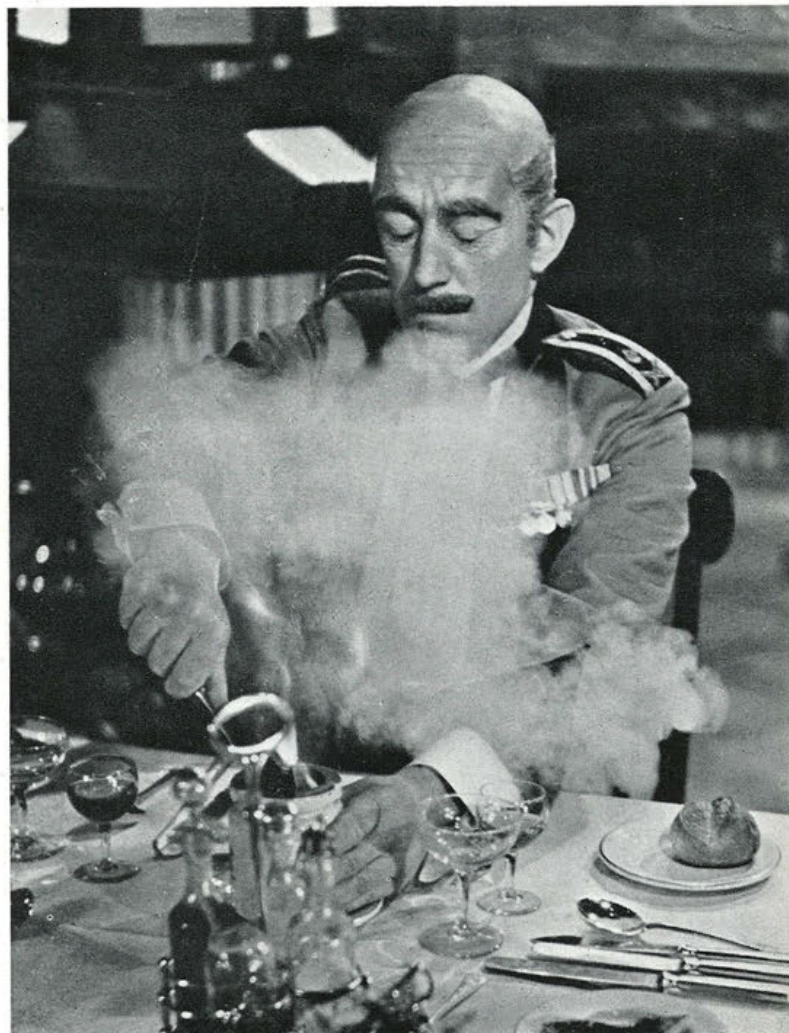
undeniable. We find the Italian films more revolutionary in technique and more timely in outlook than the British, whose insular remoteness is sometimes baffling on this side of the channel. But, from the strictest standards, it is admittedly too easy to be unfair on British films, since we see only the best Italian. The unity of purpose of the latter cannot escape notice, whereas the British film covers almost every domain of the cinema, as we are given ample evidence we have to take the best with the worst, and it is left to us to detect the occasional very fine remnants of the documentary school. Perhaps it would be unfair to complain, since the ability of British screen writers and technicians is now firmly established in various directions, and since on the other hand some recent attempts at conveying a vivid community feeling have fallen rather short, possibly because half-hearted—as one gathers in the case of *It Always Rains On Sunday*. It is universally admitted over here that the British make the best films in colour; that the two David Lean adaptations of Dickens are unrivalled "period" works; that *Dead of Night* is a highly clever film with a style of its own, something, although not epoch-making, to be remembered; that, to mention at random, *Hamlet*, *The Red Shoes*, and *A Matter of Life and Death* are worth praise for their experimental contribution to the medium; that *Brief Encounter* has a classical, exemplary narrative value, possibly equalled only in *Le Jour Se Lève*. I suppose some of the above examples will rather surprise British readers, but we will come to that. On the whole I submit that the Italian school has left a stronger impact on French critics as well as audiences, although the British one has scored more points.

The difference in outlook between French and British film criticism is great, even disregarding my countrymen's familiar habit of exaggeration. In the first place, the best of us, as can be typically seen in the case of André Bazin, may well be essayists and aestheticians rather than critics in the accepted sense of the word. Hence the probable overpraising of *Hamlet*—another great success and the recent dubbing of which is quite extraordinarily good as dubbing goes—on the ground that it has an experimental value, by showing the way to a new and promising relationship between stage and screen. Judging this from the standpoint of an abstract phenomenon, critics forgot Shakespeare. The case of the private forest overshadowing the actual tree is always occurring. Another difference is that the French are willing to praise experiment for experiment's sake, somewhat disregarding the impact of the film: this was seen in the case of *A Matter of Life and Death*, where a certain vulgarity of feeling was forgiven in

British Films in France

Unrivalled period work—Lean's *Great Expectations*.

Alec Guinness in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, a much admired British comedy and Moira Shearer and Robert Helpmann in the ballet sequence of *The Red Shoes*, admired for its "experimental contribution".



the cause of refined use of Technicolor; the same applied to *The Red Shoes*. Incidentally, the technical prowess was occasionally mistaken for sheer beauty. Finally, exoticism explains why the French show sympathy with what is referred to over here as genuine English social realism; the English themselves sometimes find it merely stagey, conventional acting. *Passport to Pimlico* and, to a lesser degree, *This Happy Breed* are cases in point; the same may well happen with *The Blue Lamp*. One more remark exceeds the domain of film criticism although it affects it. As a Frenchman whose anglophilia is undoubted, may I be permitted to say without the slightest intention of offence, that one sometimes has the impression that, as far as British present-day films are concerned, there has been no war. That all countries make all sorts of films is only natural. But few directors in France would have at present thought of making with care, skill and efficiency such a remote subject as Pushkin's *The Queen of Spades*. This difference in outlook unfortunately cuts both ways, as a few of us realised at Cannes. The English critics were shocked by the appalling impatience shown by most of the French audience to a very fine film, the reason for which being a theoretical one that the serious cinema has nowadays to deal with contemporary subjects, a view held all the more strongly after *Bicycle Thieves*. The French go by ideological fashions; the British decidedly do not. There seems little to add here.

From a box-office viewpoint, a sharp distinction has to be drawn between original and dubbed versions. The former are hardly shown at all outside the Champs-Élysées. In the popular districts of Paris and in the provinces, the exhibitor's conservatism prevails. Whatever the film, the press notices have been published and forgotten when it reaches its theatre. Moreover, much of its genuine quality is lost through dubbing. All this encourages the exhibitor's reluctance to show films on their merits, if he feels the patrons will not be attracted by what one might call the equation displayed by the posters: the title, the stars, the poster itself. Such is the vacuum that stands between the fortunate land of original versions and the rest of the country. In effect, the provincial exhibitor relies on solid confirmed principles: French films first, stardom, tales of sex and violence. Occasionally a British film will be a commercial success throughout France. There may be a number of reasons for it. It may have an immensely popular appeal as in the obvious case of *The Third Man*; it may exploit the rewards of festivals and its exceptional ambition—thus *Hamlet*; or else it may simply be a fluke. But the day when the British cinema will seriously rival the American on all French screens has not come, and is hard to foresee. Letting alone the obvious economical reasons, this fact can be primarily explained, I suppose, by the laudible inability of the English to make routine sex pictures and gangsters' tales; by the acquired familiarity of French audiences with American stars, and by the very fact that these same audiences have no use for Miss Lockwood and others. An utter lack of pulchritude clearly distinguishes Great Britain at large, but, whether one likes it or not, film audiences

fall for pulchritude the world over. Even British audiences do. Unfortunately they go wrong: they mistake Miss Lockwood for pulchritude; we prefer Rita Hayworth.

Only the education of cinema-goers through film societies can extend the success of good British films in France. I have been fortunate enough to make an experiment of that sort by lecturing for the British Council in Northern French towns. With the notable exceptions of Arras, where I found a generally alert and well-informed audience, and the handful of intelligent fans in every place, I realised that this presumably *avant-garde* public was completely unaware of new trends in the British cinema. In several towns they had not seen *The Overlanders*; in none, *Hue And Cry*. Since they have now seen excerpts from both, I was assured on one occasion that these films now stand a chance of a local release at last I firmly doubt it. It would be fatal to over-estimate at present the commercial possibilities of British pictures in this country. Going by the remarkable successes scored in Paris, it would be more fatal still, however, to imagine that the trick can be done by challenging the Americans on American lines. It is now commonplace and markedly out of date to say that *Brief Encounter* has done immeasurably more good to the English cinema than *Caesar and Cleopatra*. But it is a remark which is still worth bearing in mind. The documentary school has taught the French to appreciate England's self-portrayal. As a French critic, I can see no good in renouncing this valuable formula.

These notes certainly do not presume to crown justly with French laurels the best of the British films which have crossed the Channel since the war. It is only fair, however, to mention a few films which I have not discussed here, but which have been highly praised in France; such are *The Fallen Idol*, *Odd Man Out*, *The Way to the Stars*, *In Which We Serve*, *Blithe Spirit*, and *The Rake's Progress*. On the other hand, French critics have ignored, or underestimated, at least three films worthy of a better commercial career than they enjoyed: that is certainly the case with *Western Approaches* and less markedly with Thorold Dickinson's and Joyce Cary's *Men of Two Worlds*. I do not expect many readers to agree with my third example: *Brighton Rock*. In the pure documentary field, a limited and unsatisfactory amount of distribution seems to have taken place. Thus *Steel*, surely a notably fine piece of documentary film-making, has been fairly widely shown on a commercial basis, but long ignored by all French technicians, film society enthusiasts and critics. As a non-feature film, it had escaped notice and until recently no showing had been arranged for the more enlightened audiences. It is equally difficult to understand why no effort, on the other hand, has been made to show *Waverly Steps* extensively in as many cinemas as possible. If I may be allowed to conclude on a personal note, perhaps it may interest some readers to know that it proved the hit in my British Council tour, and was in fact preferred to excerpts from *Hamlet* and *The Red Shoes*. Why it should not become a commercial success as well, I fail to see.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

John Grierson

In the 30's, a new creative impetus in the field of public relations produced a notable school of film-making: its successes included Drifters, Song of Ceylon, Night Mail, North Sea. John Grierson, the key-figure of this renaissance, now feels that the original impetus has flagged, presents his diagnosis of the present situation and some suggested remedies. The substance of this article is an address he gave to the Institute of Public Relations in London.

WE HAVE, in our time, written the slogans of the Roman emperors. We made of the Roman coinage a first mass medium, with a range across the known world almost as considerable as that of the B.B.C. itself. At still another time, Machiavelli produced a body of doctrine for the public relations profession, important enough to become a classic guide to statesmen ever since. At yet another time there was an Institute of Public Relations just like the one in London—but with a much larger blessing and possibly a better title. It called itself the *Congregatio De Propaganda Fide*, and it had the actual illusion of a faith to be propagated.

Public relations has, in other words, quite a past on which to look back. We have operated with the princes and potentates of Church and State: when we were working for the Medici and hiring people like Leonardo, Michelangelo and Cellini, when we were competing in the building of cathedrals, painting for the Popes of Rome, and in general executing the institutional advertising of these other periods, the company was no less interesting and the achievements no less notable than now. In any consideration of the scope of public relations, this tradition which has come down from the past should not be forgotten. Much ground has been covered in the past forty years or so, and in many new forms and fresh directions, but I think that in general we may have come to a point where we are not as deeply rooted in our conception of public relations as we might be, not as conscious as we might be of its larger possibilities. The actual *extent* of our work in education and enlightenment is larger, denotatively, than ever it was—but, on the other hand, I can think of no time which was less ambitious and less penetrating in its plan for public relations.

At the moment we seem to be a long way from the time when we conceived of public relations as adding a new and dramatic force to democratic education and democratic art. We are, in fact, a long way—and in a very short time—from the planned force, penetration and (sometimes) aesthetic brilliance with which we raised all the flags of the media to present Britain's case to the world during the war. In those days we experimented; we sought talent, and gave talent its head. We believed that public relations was an imaginative art to be revealed in the last resort by a new kind of artist.

There is good reason, however, for the turn that events have taken; and it is as well to see the present phase against the larger pattern of public relations development since the middle 'twenties. All along the line we have been pushed and even controlled by the new forces of society. On the other hand, universal education has opened the public to new forces of communication: and, of course, the new media—radio, the film, and cheap reproduction—have made mass audiences possible. Communication has become vital to the mobilisation of modern society: social democracy itself—and no matter what party has been in power—has so extended the powers and responsibilities of state institutions that the ear of the public has had to be reached if co-operation for state governance of all kinds was to be secured. Big issues have been at stake involving the exposition of plans and purposes, and in the last resort explanations of the modern world and the conditioning of the public mind to citizenship within it.

The Empire Marketing Board has taken up the tale of Commonwealth relationships in a new and modern era—based not on flags or ceremonials but on products and imports, research and technical achievement. The Post Office has associated itself with the larger tale of modern communications; the Underground is conscious of the great part it can play in developing the amenities of a great city: Gas has made its desperate jump from the 19th to the 20th century by associating itself with slum clearance, town planning, local government and domestic happiness. In America, Insurance Companies associate themselves with preventive medicine, the beverages with sport and the outdoor life and the use of leisure, Shell and I.C.I. with progressive agriculture, and Western Electric, not unnaturally, with the wonders of science and the modernised classroom.

The span has widened enormously, so that to-day the simple bright adventures in public relations which may be remembered so vividly seem less important to many than the painstaking and plodding day-to-day work of exposition and elucidation on a vast scale and from a vast number of sources.

The Government film programme for 1950 is not being operated by bright little production units in which a poet like Auden, a composer like Britten, and Cavalcanti, Basil Wright, Arthur Elton, Harry Watt and the rest of them used to light



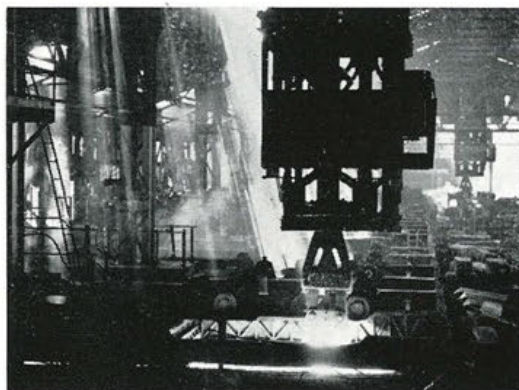
British Documentary

The stills arrangement shows various developments from the parent stem, Anstey's *Housing Problems* and Grierson's *Drifters*, above.

Left column: development of social reportage and exposition—Rotha's *World of Plenty* and Budge Cooper's *Children of the City*, produced by Rotha.

Centre column: progress in the "feature" or dramatised documentary, Pat Jackson's *Western Approaches*, and in the straightforward informational film, typified by Shell's *Built for the Job*.

Right column: Flaherty's *Man of Aran* and Basil Wright's *Song of Ceylon*, explorations in a formal and poetic style. It is this vital beginning which provides no later examples, and which John Grierson discusses in his article.



up the world of the ordinary in the simple cause of lighting up the world of the ordinary. There is a programme not for a single department, but programmes for twenty departments and more.

Works of exposition are all over the lot. The Ministry of Agriculture has to teach soil science and entomology and modern techniques if it is to secure its production programme. The Ministry of Health has to teach doctors the latest diagnostic in polio. The Home Office has to teach magistrates what prisons are like and what lunatics they themselves are to send lunatics to jail. And so on: all this is public relations in the fundamental sense that if all these specialised audiences are not instructed, the programmes of the departments are affected and their relationship with the public jeopardised.

For instance, the Colonial Office to-day has to face up to world opinion in the matter not only of its Mandates and Protectorates, but in all its handling of backward peoples. So there is a certain flow of films on how our district officers behave, what we are doing for the health and education of natives, what we are doing in scientific research and the development of resources, what we are doing in the face of the world's food problems, and finally what we are doing to help natives help themselves in co-operative administration. The Foreign Office swings in with films on the projection of Britain: not so brightly as in the old days, but still now and again. In any case it seizes the films of other departments and sends them out to its emissaries throughout the world to report the progress of Britain in the fields of public management and social development. It even has to make a film on Constable to tell other countries of the Brussels Pact that we too had a painter once, who taught Monet and Cezanne where to begin it.

In greater or lesser degree other departments are similarly concerned in the process of creating the goodwill necessary if they are to carry out their programmes. There is also another category, which may be described as the direct creation of opinion—but not, let it be clear, of political opinion. I have somewhat independent views of the present Government's handling of the information services, as I shall presently recount, and cast a baleful eye on certain decisions made from years ago. On the other hand, no Government I know—and I have served half a dozen at least, here and overseas—has ever been more honest and honourable, under difficult circumstances, in its objective: non-partisan use of the information services. At the same time, opinion has to be created wherever matters urgently involving the national will are concerned; so a certain number of films inevitably are there to do things to people; stir them to greater productivity, to mobilise labour in particular directions, to exhort to economies and even to austerity. But this represents only a small proportion of the programme, and it may be too small a proportion. Exhortation these days for some reason or another is not our longest suit, and the lack of it in its highest form eliminates substance from our national information programme. Maybe it is too difficult; maybe it is too daring, maybe it involves a faith in ourselves and a confidence in the future we do not possess; or maybe, simply, the inspiration is not there on an authoritative ministerial level. Anyway, when we exhort we tend to exhort in little things: and the drums of Drake which are our public relations heritage are to-day more than slightly muffled.

In all these aspects, however, of the film in public relations—in instruction, exposition, accounting of stewardship and securing goodwill—the service is larger than in any country outside the U.S.S.R., which these days we simply don't know

about. It would be wrong, too, not to mention that the average technical quality is very high indeed. In the expositional categories the Shell Film Unit is unrivalled, and both G.B.I. and Data have reached remarkable standards in the past year with *Circulation of the Blood* and *Liverfluke in Sheep*. It might be said, indeed, that when it comes to filming subjects like liverfluke in sheep, we do this to a turn. In particular, too, there is no one like us when we are dealing with *Your Children's Eyes* or *Your Children's Sleep* or *Day-break in Udi*, or in any field of film-making which calls for the articulation of humanitarian progress.

But the deeper aspects of public relations, the quality of revelation, are missing. No *Night Mail* these days, no *North Sea*, no *Song of Ceylon*, nor *Farrebique*. In the film sense we are desperately short of poems and symphonies, as we lack poets and writers generally. There is little adventuring into the achievements of the individual into our society, or into the life of our communities. Public relations films in general lack a sense of event and of constructive forces in the making; nowadays there is practically no experiment and practically no latitude for personal feeling and personal effort.

In conjunction with this criticism, it must also be said that whatever we may be doing to tell the world and ourselves about the activities of our Colonial Empire, we are, for lack of spirit in the matter, not doing nearly enough. We are going through a great scientific and technological revolution, but I know of no central plan for the re-education of our people in methods of thought and practice which may be crucial to our future. As for the projection of Britain herself, it is, in spite of the great international stakes at play, a patchwork affair made up of the bits and pieces that emanate from departmental—and that is to say, parochial—sources. It is operated unprofessionally to no grand plan at all.

Reverting to first principles: when this association of the film with public relations was first developed, the basic thesis was that education for modern citizenship had to find new and dramatic forms if our now complex world was to be understood, and that here, in the great departments of state and the great institutions of industry and commerce, we were at the heart of the matter. The whole business of public relations was seen in the light of a creative adventure in which the partners—the sponsors and the artists—were equal participants. It is this, I believe, that has fundamentally slipped.

To-day, public relations has not the same sense of common mission with the artist and the educator, nor have they the same sense of common mission with public relations. Otherwise there would not be so many taking their quiet and gentle exit from the field at present: or, what may be worse still, sticking around only to gnaw their nails in frustration.

So far as films are concerned, it is interesting to note where the exceptions lie. In particular, no one in Shell seems frustrated. Without half the opportunities of some others, this unit seems to have sold itself the idea that it has a mission of leadership in technical education and agricultural progress across the world, and the curious thing is that here and abroad it works and acts as if it had.

This is not, of course, simply an accident nor just the fault of the individuals who command the forces of sponsorship. It is true that many of the forces in public relations to-day are amateur, that where there is no instrument of policy, or policy, people are recruited in terms of bureaucratic competences which have no relationship to the art of public relations. But the film people can equally be blamed. They have become so expensive as to frighten any Treasury. Many



Louisiana Story

of them are as little concerned with the relationship with art and education as the public relations men themselves: many of them are far behind the complex pattern of events which departments and institutions deal with to-day. On both the public relations and the technical side men are trying to get along from pillar to post, in fact, with a very natural eye to security in a troubled world and no inspiration in it.

But if anything is to be blamed, it must be the system latterly developed. It was a mistake, I believe, to split the foreign from the home service, for this makes it inordinately difficult to conceive the projection of Britain as a living whole. It was also a great setback when the Government found no other alternative to the terms of reference of the Ministry of Education than the terms of reference of the C.O.I. What has happened, in effect, is the elimination of the positive benefits of ministerial leadership and the subjection of the whole process to the mercies of departmental policies. The result is that no one to-day in the whole sphere of public relations is charged with the duty of striking a blow for the country as a whole. It ought surely to have been possible to create a Board on a high authoritative level, which could have established a plan and a policy for information in the national interest, as well as the necessary parochial service to the departments. This in fact is what other countries are finding it perfectly simple to do at this moment.

Against this suggestion for a major solution of our difficulties, I have some minor comments to make. On the film side, there has in the past years been a fairly desperate process of spring cleaning, of reducing costs, improving the sometimes vague relationships between Public Relations Officers and film makers, attempting to bring into a semblance of order a documentary growth almost rank with its own success. But with order restored, a great responsibility falls on Public Relations Officers under the present system. Understandably, they object when a film scheduled for

£10,000 comes in at £20,000, and they expect to get something which, in some slight degree, resembles what they asked for. But the final answer lies not in a system of controls which chokes life and liberty out of the whole creative process. Nothing less, however, is happening to-day.

The personal role of the Public Relations Officer in this connection is therefore important. He has to take more of a chance on his judgment than he generally does at present, and rely less on the committees and other kibitzing whatnots behind whom he now usually hides. Above all, he should either give up deceiving himself from his bureaucratic arm-chair that he is a film maker, or come into the business and take competition.

Leadership in the next phase of public relations does not inevitably fall to the forces of government. At home and abroad it has become apparent how the more inspired of the houses of industry and commerce have made their own great contribution. But if the fault of the Government set-up is that it is over-organised, the fault of the industrial set-up is that it does not organise enough. I have always hoped that I.C.I., Shell, Anglo-Iranian, Lever Brothers and others would combine to plan a co-ordinated film programme, so that the largest long-term contribution might be made to technical and agricultural education, colonial development and international relations. An inevitable combination of such forces of industry and commerce can be foreseen in the educational development of Africa: we would be wise if, out of our special experience in Britain, we were to give such developments a lead.

There is much in these various directions to be done. In the present ugly phase, the scope of the film in public relations is deeply threatened. The problems of necessary post-war reorganisation and administration have not been kind to it. But the medium is in itself too powerful and too commanding of creative force to be thwarted for very long, and so is the larger pursuit of public relations.

Films of the Month

ORPHEE

Gavin Lambert

COCTEAU'S WORK in the cinema since *L'éternel retour* has been uneven and puzzling; the promise of a "poésie du cinéma" which that film held out seemed to recede with its successors. In *La belle et la bête* the magic was too deliberately tricked and artificial, *L'aigle à deux têtes* was an unfortunate, stagey misfire, and *Les parents terribles* was a virtuoso success in prose. Had Cocteau's extraordinary feeling for the magical and the legendary, one wondered, begun to flag—or had he found it impossible to transfer to the increasingly realistic medium of the cinema and embarked, with the version of *Les parents terribles*, on a change of direction? None of these doubts, it now appears, was justified. His new film, *Orphée*, not only shows Cocteau at the height of his poetic talent but, as a film, is one of the most fascinating and adventurous produced for many years.

Cocteau has used the legend of Orpheus as a starting point for one of his favourite themes: the poet's ecstatic conflict between the real world and the unknowable. His first experiment in the cinema, *Le sang d'un poète*, made twenty years ago, was a more obscure exposition of the same theme, and though on re-viewing to-day it appears much too slow and static, it is of considerable interest for the symbols and ideas which have reappeared since, particularly in *Orphée*. *Le sang d'un poète* is deliberately unreal in the sense that it takes place in a personal dream world—timeless, confused, illogical—just as *La belle et la bête* seeks to create its own fairyland of no special period or location. *Orphée*, however, is set in the framework of a contemporary world. Cocteau's Orpheus is a handsome, successful and envied poet, isolated figure in the café life of St. Germain; his dark lady is a chic, wealthy-looking Princess, who travels in a Rolls Royce driven by a young chauffeur; his wife, Eurydice, is a simple, middle-class girl who used to work at a women's club run by her friend Aglaonice.

Thus the magic and the legend that follow arise from an ordinary world, from recognisable objects and surroundings; and from this they gain immeasurably in excitement. The revelation of fantasy occurs through the apparently ordinary. The elegant Princess is Death: her chauffeur, Heurtebise, a student suicide, accompanies her in her journeyings between two worlds; her immediate aides are two motor cyclists, who run down a drunken poet, Cégeste, outside the *café des poètes* in St. Germain. The Princess takes Orpheus into her car as



Death and the mirror: Maria Casares as the Princess and Edouard Dermithe as Cégeste in "Orphée".

a witness, they drive out of Paris into the countryside, and suddenly the landscape changes into negative, remote and flat, and the Princess turns on a portable radio. Through the babble of announcers and music another, unknown station is reached, on which a voice gives mysterious instructions in code. "L'oiseau chante avec ses doigts. Je répète. Deux fois. L'oiseau chante avec ses doigts . . .". The motor cyclists roar past the car, and the Princess greets them. In the early evening, the car draws up outside a deserted villa. The aides carry Cégeste's body up to an empty room. While Orpheus watches, the Princess reanimates his body and obtains his servitude as another of her agents. She brushes aside the incredulity and questioning of Orpheus with impatience, and prepares to take Cégeste with her to the shades.

The way through from this world to the next is by a mirror: to the magic touch it dissolves like water. The Princess and Cégeste pass through it, and the glass re-forms as soon as they have gone.

Escorted home in the car by Heurtebise, who now awaits further instructions from his mistress, Orpheus tells him to keep the Rolls in the garage: he has become obsessed by the radio signals, which are to him a new and wonderful source of poetic inspiration. At this stage he does not realise the nature of this source—nor the identity of the Princess. He is out of the house when the motor cyclists suddenly roar past, and only Heurtebise hears them. He is asleep when the Princess, shrouded in a long cloak, enters his room through



Orpheus prepares to descend to the shades. Francois Perier, Jean Marais, Marie Dea.

the mirror and stands watching him.

She declares herself when her aides run over Eurydice on the road outside the house and kill her. Orpheus, with the aid of Heurtebise, goes down to the shades after his wife—but he goes also because he is fascinated by the Princess and has an overwhelming desire to see her again. When Heurtebise asks him whether he is going because he wants Eurydice, or the Princess, he answers: “Les deux . . .”.

The last half of the film, taken up with Orpheus’ journeyings between this world and the no-man’s-land of the next, are as full of mystery and poetry as the first half is of a more immediate excitement. One remembers especially the first approach to the shades, through the ruins of gutted ancient buildings, with Heurtebise gliding along in front of Orpheus, the wind which Orpheus cannot feel ruffling his hair: the extraordinary Tribunal in front of which he finds the Princess, on trial for having disobeyed instructions by killing Eurydice, and confessing her love for Orpheus. Of the return, when Orpheus brings back Eurydice but must not look at her, Cocteau makes a dry comedy—an unexpected touch which allows for a brief rest in the tension, twisted back again to tragedy when Eurydice, feeling she has lost her husband, forces him to look at her and is so banished again to the shades. This coincides with the arrival of the Bacchantes—the St. Germain poets who believe Orpheus responsible for the disappearance of Cégeste, and the friends of Aglaonice—who assemble threateningly outside his house. In the brawl Orpheus is shot, and he follows Eurydice. The Princess,

knowing that love is denied to her, sends him back, undoes all that she has done, reunites the poet and his wife, and then, with Heurtebise, goes off to face some unspeakable retribution.

Looked at simply as a film, without regard to its symbolism, *Orphée* is first an unmatched achievement in the telling of a magical adventure. The balance of the real and the magical is marvellously sustained: after the first scene in the poets’ café, at the end of which Orpheus goes off with the Princess in her car, it keeps to a slow, dreamlike rhythm that builds up a poetic and enigmatic atmosphere—but the narrative is so full of invention that it never ceases to be dramatic. Always it points to the crack in the normal surface: the mirror that opens, the Princess appearing and disappearing about her business in the streets of Paris while Orpheus distractedly pursues her, the motor cyclists that shoot past along the dusty road, the radio in the car with its clear, unfathomable messages.

All this, no doubt, is responsible for the publicity catchline—“The immortal thriller”. With characteristic brilliance, Cocteau has in fact used much of the cinema’s apparatus of melodrama for his purpose. The secret radio becomes one of the film’s most important symbols: its code is the source of all mystery, the mouthpiece of death itself, its signs and portents constantly enriched by the new dead, by Cégeste and others like him who transmit new messages of their own imagining. It becomes the most tangible evidence of the poet’s anguished ecstasy, as he feverishly listens for its voice and its signals. Again, the Princess’ headquarters are a deserted villa, every room bare and spattered with builder’s rubbish except for her own, which is comfortably

furnished. The infernal tribunal to which she is summoned takes place in one of these rooms, her soberly dressed judges with their whisperings and sharp glances have the sinister bureaucratic façade of secret police.

As well as realigning in effect the Orphic myth to centre on the conflicting obsessions of a poet fascinated by the unknown and unseen, which he comes to recognise as the province of death, Cocteau replaces the arbitrary force which death represents in Greek mythology by human figures with human desires and feelings. The Princess loves Orpheus: Heurtebise loves Eurydice: both sacrifice their love, knowing it to be fruitless. This, unlike the other motives in the films, would seem to be a purely poetic conceit, but in a logical sense too it matches the conception of the whole. Since the dead have acclimatised themselves to this world, entering it by mirrors, using its machines both for convenience and essential business, communicating with each other by radio, a further reciprocity is not unimaginable. Poets have been in love with death: here, death also falls in love with poets. The symbols, the mysteries and the powers of death must indeed, to fascinate so acutely, be “living”. This personification is traditional with Cocteau, though by the number of times it has earned him the epithets “pretentious” and “decadent” one might think it unique to him, and not itself a romantic tradition.

For, in essence, *Orphée* reasserts a romantic mood at an unfashionable moment. It reasserts wonder, ritual, the power of illusion and magic, reinterpreting them in a contemporary setting which brings the myth closer, gives it a disturbing edge



"Orphée": the last shot.

of reality. Probably, too, it contains a good deal that is autobiographical, which is a highly interesting precedent in the cinema. The film is finely photographed by Nicholas Hayer, the trickwork refined and convincing, and beautifully acted, especially by Maria Casarés. Her Princess is a haunting

creation, dark, formidable and yet tragic on a human level. Auric's score, notably a recurring tune for flute, is the best he has composed for some time: but it is the menacing drum rhythms of the Bacchantes (the film's most striking sound effect) that remain the strongest aural memory.

"STAGE FRIGHT" AND HITCHCOCK

Simon Harcourt-Smith

IT IS THE TRAGEDY of the cinema, of the Anglo-Saxon cinema at least, not to have been born two centuries ago, among grown men, instead of into a society that glorified adolescence, into the age of Barrie, of the *Boys' Own Paper* and the perpetually boyish statesmen. In such a world the lusts of the decent, the treacheries of the honest, the cowardice of the brave, are *tabu*; the grandeurs and decadences of the human heart are not supposed to be probed by the cinema. The theatre may do it; but then, the theatre is an elderly reprobate of dwindling charm; the Anglo-Saxon cinema is isolated into that peculiar antiseptic dream-world of the bookstall magazine.

No wonder, then, if the frustrated director seeks freedom in playing Indians—in making films of improbable violence and detailed pain. For while he must never, never suggest that adultery can end in happiness, scenes of advanced sadism apparently do nobody any harm.

Within the frontiers of this cruel dream-world, whose talent has luxuriated more than Hitchcock's? He has deliberately chosen to transfer to the screen the adventure serial from the magazines. Had chance taken him into the comparative "sophistication" of the Continental studios, the outcome might well have been different. But conditions here and in

America no doubt have accentuated an adolescent tendency which may have been always latent in Hitchcock. Let us not be dazzled by the gloss of maturity, for beneath it lies an attitude essentially immature. It is no mysterious quirk that gives Hitchcock his passion for practical jokes, and is said to have caused him once to pay a small boy eight pounds a week, for the duty of following one of the director's colleagues down the corridors of Pinewood and putting a tongue out at him.

Robert Sherwood, Thornton Wilder, Dorothy Parker and James Bridie have all worked on scripts for Hitchcock: Dali designed for his *Spellbound* a dream sequence: Hitchcock has based films on ideas of Maugham, Steinbeck, Conrad and Patrick Hamilton in his time. Yet on balance he seems happiest in the world of the novelette. Simenon and Chandler and Graham Greene have raised the story of violence on to the level of literature. Simenon in particular excels in the creation of suspense such as seems ideally suited to Hitchcock's talents. Yet he turns for inspiration more frequently to the John Buchans, the Ian Hays, the Daphne du Mauriers, Robert Hichenses and Selwyn Jepsons.

Of course, there is no reason why a director of Hitchcock's

accomplishment should not create a masterpiece out of a novelette. Max Roger, I fancy, once wrote an admirable fugue on the air of "Pop Goes the Weasel". But such an exercise should remain a solitary *tour de force*, not become a habit as it has with Hitchcock. There is of course no denying his successful exploitation of this habit, the originality of his early years, the cunning of his later ones, nor his talent for extracting more than the best from his players. Yet continual hobnobbing with the second-rate tends to blunt the critical sense of the most fastidious; in Hitchcock it may account for the curious oscillations in the quality of his output, and particularly for the recent decline into the ineptitudes of his latest film, *Stage Fright*.

This is by no means the first of his sudden declines. In the middle 'thirties, after a period of eclipse, he suddenly found his feet with *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. His triumph was repeated with *The 39 Steps* and reached a climax with *The Lady Vanishes* in 1938. A few months later, with *Jamaica Inn*, he lapsed into shabby melodrama.

Yet while he was directing this film he was also negotiating to enter David O. Selznick's service, and to make for him in Hollywood *Rebecca*, perhaps one of the main climaxes of his career so far. Here for once his characters became something more than vigorous two-dimensional puppets. And if the depth they take is the depth of the best-seller one can excuse it in return for the almost "Gothic" atmosphere that Hitchcock contrived.

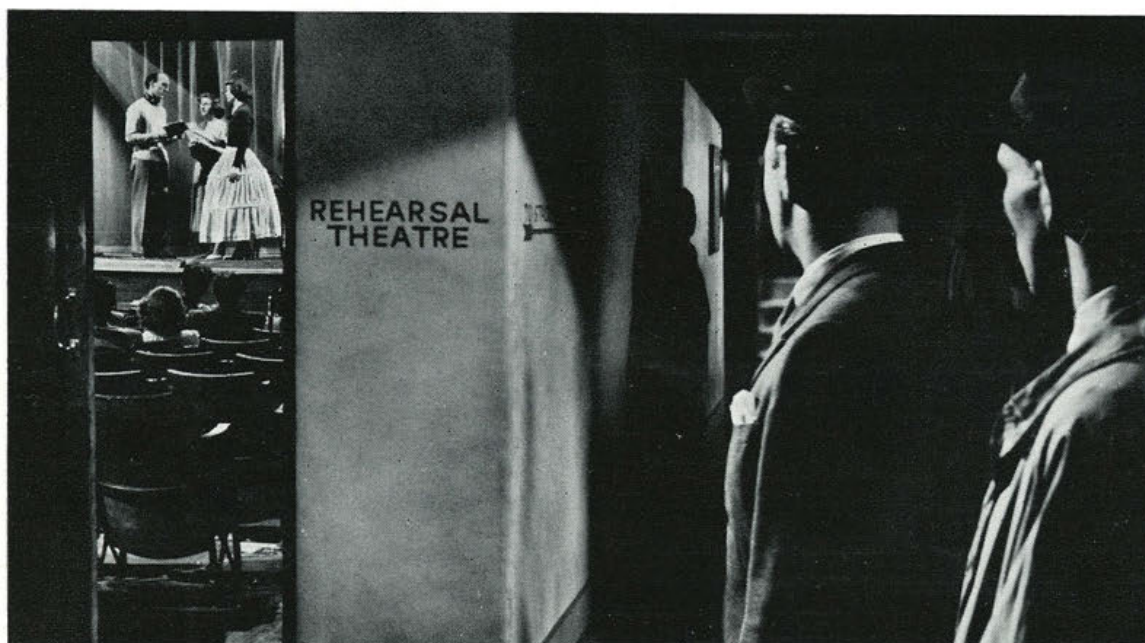
Almost immediately, however, the decline started afresh, though hidden behind the polished ingenuities of *Foreign Correspondent* (1940) and by Joan Fontaine's performance in *Suspicion* (1942). On the other hand, in *Saboteur*, made in the same year, Hitchcock, amid the rising plaudits of the world, seemed intent upon parodying every trick with which he had set us a-flutter in the past.

Next came a partial recovery. In *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) the Hitchcock originality flares up anew for a moment. Here he exploits the possibilities of horror not in the howling storm, but in a sunny Californian town whose shadows have room for nothing bigger than boredom. The early sequences

of this picture are full of promise; but somehow, somewhere, the basic idea goes shamefully to waste, the talents of neither Joseph Cotten nor of Teresa Wright can inspire our interest in the fate of the puppets they play.

Since that moment, Hitchcock becomes little more than a purveyor of fashionable entertainment. Not for us to quarrel with the glossy simplifications of psychiatry in *Spellbound* (1946), nor Ingrid Bergman's ruthless mastication of Cary Grant in *Notorious* (1946). It is all unquestionably assured and efficient. But alas! even the entertainment has begun to lose its efficiency these last four years. There is a hardly successful regeneration of Hitchcock's experimental spirit with *Rope* and its "ten-minute takes" in 1948. But somehow in *Rope*, *The Paradine Case*, *Under Capricorn* and now in *Stage Fright* we have the impression of a machine running down not because its motive fuel is running out, but from its driver's own boredom. Particularly is this mood suggested in *Stage Fright*. Here the direction, the artistic discipline for which Hitchcock was once famous are hardly to be seen. Nobody concerned seems to have more than a perfunctory thought for the shabby conventions that pass for plot. Worse still, the picture commits perhaps the most heinous offence of all: its foreground becomes its background and vice versa. While we can hardly greet with even a yawn the antics of Jane Wyman, Richard Todd and Michael Wilding in an unexciting cat-and-mouse game between the young fugitive, the girl who helps him and the police inspector, it is enough for Alastair Sim to stroll on to the screen in a character part or for Marlene Dietrich to swing one of those immortal legs, and the air begins to crackle. Here is no film in the proper sense of the word, but a number of turns at a theatrical garden party.

These necessarily brief criticisms of Hitchcock's work up to the present moment are made in no attempt at denigration. It is precisely because his gifts are so brilliant that we must deplore his wasting them. Real life, in Europe at least, tends more and more to take on the shape of a Hitchcock thriller. Why then does he not turn here for inspiration? Perhaps he will. In any case let us not make the mistake of imagining that he holds no more surprises for us.



"Stage Fright": the fugitive (Richard Todd, shadowed in corridor) takes refuge in the R.A.D.A. On stage, Jane Wyman (right) goes through a scene.

EDITING

Karel Reisz

THAT UNWIELDY and unattractive piece of editing trickery which is known as the American montage sequence at last shows signs of dying out. There was a time when falling calendar leaves, close shots of train wheels, picture postcard snow scenes and falling autumn leaves, all muddled up and shuffled with the aid of a few dissolves and wipes, formed part of almost every Hollywood movie with any pretensions.

The war gave the montage makers a fresh fillip (the thing actually became a job for experts, and some producers had their montages made independently of the film): battle offensives were shown as columns of marching soldiers superimposed over a map of the battlefield, dissolving into shots of General Eisenhower and finally being wiped away by a shot of the tired hero. A sort of factual impressionism was evolved which proved a very useful asset to the script-writer. When a continuity difficulty arose—how to bridge a gap of time or space, or how to indicate a gradual transition in the story—the montage sequence did the trick. (Sidney Cole has described how he “once had the task of indicating a passage of time from 1066 to 1588 with no guidance from the script beyond fade-out and fade-in, and an obvious conviction on the part of the director that it had nothing to do with him anyway”.) As most commonly used, the American montage sequence conveys a series of factual impressions, and is not meant to do anything else. That in itself is an inauspicious motive for using it, for while it may conveniently and economically resolve a lapse in the continuity, it tends to take the story on to a different and altogether less personal plane, and thereby inevitably weaken the film's total strength.

Robert Rossen, in making *All the King's Men*, has resorted to using montage sequences to get him out of several difficulties. (There is a special montage credit beside the editor's). Faced with the adaptor's problem of whether to reduce the number of characters and situations from the novel in order to concentrate on the central theme, or whether to reproduce most of the novel's plot and face the difficulties of a plotbound film, Rossen has tried to have it both ways. He has tried to keep most of the novel's intricate narrative and many characters, yet at the same time to infuse some warmth into the half dozen central figures. If it has not worked, it is because there is not time to do both. The final effect is that one feels a tremendous amount has happened and the characters have remained oddly unaffected by it all.

The complete inadequacy of the montage form for conveying any kind of emotional conflict is best borne out by the early scene in which the young reporter, Jack Burden, returns to his country home (Burden's Landing) for a vacation. Rossen was evidently so pressed for screen time that he merely shows a couple of short scenes of Burden's arrival and rounds it off with a montage of a few shots with the young reporter and his girl lazily enjoying their holiday. As an attempt to convey something of the calm security of the old country home, this montage is a total failure. Rossen tries to make much of the contrast between this stable, dignified retreat and the corrupting hurly-burly of Stark's

election machine, and this could have proved one of the film's strongest elements. As they stand, however, the Burden's Landing scenes are not allowed to come to life, and the contrast becomes understood and accepted rather than felt.

The montages which follow—of elections, beatings-up, football games and the rest—have a similar effect. One feels that Rossen is rather reluctantly trying to get awkward sections of plot out of the way so that he can acceptably return to his more personal narrative. But the film's emotional level is so thrown out of gear that the attempt fails. Through its constant changes of style, it degenerates into a series of rather cold episodes which fail to add up to anything like a total gesture.

What has all this to do with editing? Simply this:

It seems likely that a reading of Rossen's script would not reveal the essential weakness of the treatment. Rossen the writer seems to have fallen short of Rossen the director (other than in the montage scenes, the film is handled with admirable assurance), in that he has not properly visualised the total effect which the editing of his scripted material will convey. As it stands, the film is conceived in an editing style which makes a sustained emotional appeal impossible.





The Asphalt Jungle

These two scenes are from the final sequence of John Huston's *The Asphalt Jungle* (M.G.M.). Dix (Sterling Hayden) lies dead on the Kentucky farm where he spent his boyhood. His girl friend, Doll (Jean Hagen) runs towards the houses, calling for help. (Hayden portrays a small-time gunman who robs to have money to return to the farm, but who dies just as he reaches his goal.)

Here is the corresponding section of the script of this sequence, by Ben Maddow (who scripted *Intruder in the Dust*) and John Huston.

226. MEDIUM TWO SHOT—DOLL AND DIX.

His face lies in the grass. He murmurs inaudibly. Doll puts her hands under him and turns him over. His life is ebbing.

DOLL: Dix! Dix! Dix!

Then she lets go of him, sobbing, and gets to her feet and runs, uphill, the CAMERA PANNING TO FOLLOW HER. Over the crest of the hill, very distant, a man is mowing hay with a team. She screams towards him.

DOLL: Mister! Mister! Mister!

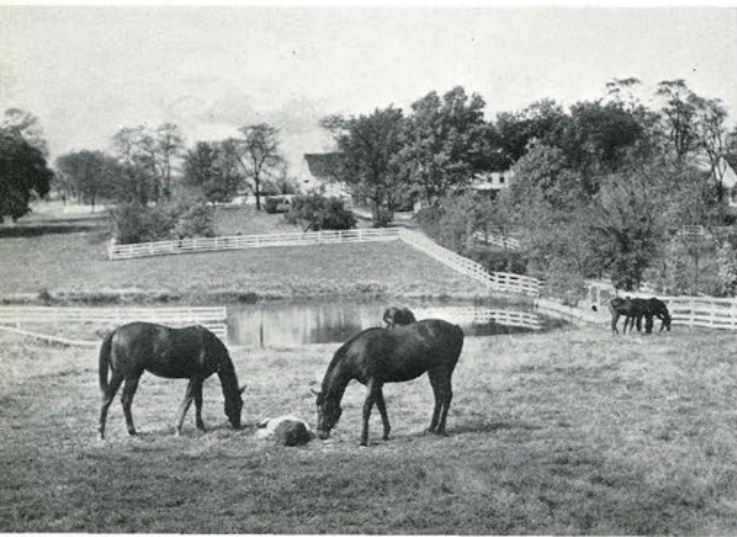
227. MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT—DIX, FACE UPWARD, EYES OPEN, DEAD ON THE GROUND.

DOLL (off-screen, distant): Mister! Wait!

Then her voice is no longer audible. There's a second of perfect silence, then a peculiar shadow moves over the grass and over Dix's body and across his face. It's the shadow of a horse, and now a big bay gelding walks slowly towards him, lowering his head to look at Dix. Another horse, full of their peculiar slow curiosity, comes up too. And then, still other horses move toward the group, and they stand there, looking down at the dead human face, watching with infinite patience.

FADE OUT.

END.



A PLAYWRIGHT LOOKS AT THE “FILMWRIGHT”

Howard Koch

AS AN AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHT who writes for the screen and the stage with a deep respect for both mediums, I have grave objections to the thesis of Thorold Dickinson's thoughtful article in a recent issue of this magazine. I feel certain Mr. Dickinson wants what all serious film makers in Europe and America are seeking—a less haphazard and more sensible system of film production—but it seems to me that he is merely inventing a new word to offer an old solution. He proposes, in effect, that the director be returned to the status of creator-in-chief as in silent days and that this dominant position be recognised in the title which he has coined for him—filmwright. Under this arrangement the writer would presumably be confined to supplying the dialogue, as a scenic designer contributes the sets, and the gaffer the lighting effects.

At first glance this may sound like a neat and plausible idea. Unity is certainly desirable and this would settle the question of whose unity it is to be. Mr. Dickinson supports his filmwright proposal with various arguments, the first historical. He recalls the glory of the silent film in the hands of Griffith, Chaplin and Eisenstein, who brought pantomime to its highest screen expression.

It is true that the best works of these men are enduring masterpieces, but it should be remembered that the motion picture of that era was a simpler and more limited medium. Eisenstein and Griffith made no sound pictures comparable to their silent ones, and Chaplin still seems to be seeking the form in which his special pantomimic genius can best be translated into the two-sensory film. Moreover, Mr. Dickinson leaves unsaid the obvious fact that for every *Potemkin* and *City Lights* of that day, there were thousands of primitive and gauche attempts on the part of the practising film makers to tell their story in terms of directorial improvisation. If you doubt the fallibility of the director as a spontaneous creator, try to sit through the average picture made in the period when he held undisputed and individual sway. You will be more impressed by the infantilism of his product than by his genius—even though it is true that a few of the infants were prodigious.

I feel that Mr. Dickinson's present argument is on an equally insecure footing. Since the film is primarily a visual medium, it follows, he contends, that the person traditionally in charge of the set when the action is being photographed should be invested with full creative authority. In reaching this conclusion, Mr. Dickinson has to dismiss the writer's participation beyond that of supplying dialogue which the director would sprinkle into his visually-realised scenes whenever he felt that the auxiliary use of spoken words was dramatically appropriate. He even suggests that writers are correct in their preoccupation with dialogue, since that is the one way of their making a contribution which stands any chance of remaining in the finished picture.

It seems to me a strange notion that the visual and the auditory can be so neatly separated, or that the playwright will be able to function in such an isolated role. Does Mr. Dickinson really believe that a writer creates only by ear? Any dramatist worthy of that designation visualises each scene in detail; he smells, tastes and feels the atmosphere in which the action takes place and—yes, he hears the sounds—dialogue as well as other sounds. If his function were suddenly restricted to the words spoken by his characters (that significant “his” crept in without premeditation!) he would be a curiously maimed creature unfitted for creation as, under the same handicaps, he would be unfitted for life. For the world is not segmented into different sense areas. Our impression of reality is a fusion of all our perceptions and, if we seek to re-create this experience, we must do so with our whole minds.

It is easy to agree with Mr. Dickinson's observation that the film *is* primarily a visual medium. Life itself is primarily a visual medium. We are affected more by what we see than by our other perceptions. I doubt if all the road-safety slogans that bombard us over the radio slow down our speed as much as five miles an hour, no matter how vividly they verbally predict the mayhem in store for us by our incautious driving. But let any of us happen to be a spectator at the scene of a serious accident where a family is stretched out on the cement pavement alongside the twisted remains of their wrecked car—and the temptation to speed, at least for the rest of the day, is easily overcome.

There is no doubt that the average run-of-the-mill picture of our day is shamefully verbose, using dialogue as a crutch to limp through its hackneyed formula plot. But the fault goes much deeper than the wordy proclivities of so-called dialogue writers. If Hollywood has one sin above all others, it is the persuasion of too many of its film makers in all categories that the audiences will not “understand” the implication of what they see on the screen unless it is spelt out in words. This is a form of contempt for people which, unfortunately, is present in many aspects of our national life besides our cinema. The word is used not only to explain the deed, but often, alas, as its substitute.

The advent of talking pictures calls to mind an early one-act play entitled “The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife”. The premise of the story is in its title. To overcome the silence of his domicile, the husband secures the services of a famous surgeon who succeeds in repairing the wife's vocal chords. The result is unforeseen and alarming. Such a torrent of words has been dammed in the feminine breast that, when they emerge, the poor husband is inundated. As the play closes, he is pleading with the surgeon for a second operation—this time to restore his wife to her original state of benign silence. I am not recommending such a drastic solution for motion pictures. Sound must play its important auxiliary role in the complex of experience we are re-creating for the screen.

The important question remains—who conceives this experience in its essential dramatic terms? It seems incontrovertible to me that the writer is the primary creative source. He puts down on paper the significant symbol, visual as well as auditory, through which character is revealed in a progressive series of definitive tensions. It is the writer's imagination that first previews—however inchoately and incompletely—the substance of what eventually appears on the screen.

Now what is the province of the director who is clearly not in authority and, in most cases, not even in evidence during the initial creative process? Unless, of course, he is Cecil B. De Mille dictating what he wants in the script to a roomful

of glorified clerks. But this is concoction rather than creation, and the resulting epic is a painful reminder of the method by which it was achieved.

Nevertheless, the director's role can be creative in quite a different way, depending on his capacities for developing and enriching the originally conceived story. Whenever I try to imagine motion picture direction on its highest and most creative level, I invariably think of William Wyler. Besides his sensitive appraisal of dramatic values and his abundant technical resources, he displays an unswerving allegiance to the true line of every story he is putting on film. Because he measures every facet of his production in terms of its relationship to the whole—the thing—he achieves an unfailing unity.

In the preparation period he never tells a writer what to write—he has too much respect for the creative process—but he is relentless in pushing the writer to a fuller realisation of the story he set out to tell. Once on the set Wyler further enriches the action that was preconceived in the script by his meticulous attention to every detail of the production.

I would like to mention one personal example, because it illustrates so precisely what I consider the ideal creative junction of writer and director. In my script of *The Letter*, made some years ago at Warner Brothers, I had used the tropical moonlight with its hard shadows as an atmospheric reminder to Leslie of the lover she had killed on such a moonlight night at the opening of the picture. When I went down on the set, I found that Wyler, in collaboration with the set designer and the cameraman, was merging my image of the past with a portent of Leslie's future. When she tried to shut out the moonlight and its anguishing memories, it crept through venetian blinds or lattice work to cast bars at her feet. When *The Letter* appeared on the screen, it was basically a transference of my dramatisation of the Somerset Maugham story. But the picture was better than my screen-play because the production had enormously enriched its value.

However, this is not an average experience in Hollywood, because Wyler is not an average director. I think it is fair to say that any writer who finds in his produced film an approximation of the dramatic values he has written into the screen play is extraordinarily lucky. This is not to claim that all members of the Screen Writers' Guild are competent playwrights—that would be too much to expect in any art or craft—but I have justifiable reason to assert that those who *are* qualified find themselves at the mercies of the directors, stars, and executive heads of the studios. In our present set-up, any of these can, and often do, alter the original content in whatever way they see fit. The playwright must thread his precarious way through all sorts of hazards, such as the constant fear of many studio executives that the picture will be “over the audience's head”, the avarice of some stars for showy and wordy scenes, and the unfounded notion on the part of many directors that they can change a scene at will without affecting the whole structure. All these “creative” privileges often weigh more heavily than the unity of the writer's basic conception. In my opinion, Mr. Dickinson's suggestion does not add protection to the creator, but tends to divest him further of what little authority over his work he now enjoys.

For the average American director is an instrument of the star system by which business men operate as artistic arbiters over someone else's work. Whereas the writer is treated as an outsider and often as a necessary evil, the director is considered part of the company. Significantly he even sits in the sacrosanct executive dining room. The screen play is not considered a thing in itself, but rather a flexible chart for



Gale Sondergaard and Bette Davis in "The Letter".

something much more synthetic that will emerge from the set. This is not what Mr. Dickinson means, of course, but these are the facts of life, at least in Hollywood. I am afraid that his proposal of further extending the director's province would only serve to give artistic sanction to what is primarily and illogically a business arrangement.

In my mind there is one solution—and only one. The screen play must be given the same centrality and protection accorded the stage play under the Dramatist's Guild Contract. The screen writer must thereby assume his primary responsibility—and he should be weeded out if he is unfitted to assume it—as his fellow authors writing for the theatre. Instead of the salaried status of a studio employee, he should be willing to rent his screen play on a royalty basis to a qualified producer and director. As in the theatre, they would be close collaborators with the author on every aspect of their mutual enterprise and less dependent on the peculiar exigencies of the front-office, star-system set-up.

This view is antithetical to Mr. Dickinson's stated position. He asks us flatly to exorcise from our minds the "misconceived parallel of theatre and the film", and, by extension, that of the screen playwright and the stage playwright. For the life of me, I don't see why the parallel is not very close, inasmuch as the play, in both cases, is conceived and written in terms of visual action and dialogue which actors perform under the guidance of a director. One is spatially mobile and recorded on film; the other is performed in a confined area within view of its audience. Outside of the technical and stylistic differences, the basic dramatic requirements are the same.

I also disagree with the sharp distinction Mr. Dickinson makes between writers who "adapt" stories already in existence and those who "create" original stories. In this instance, the words "adapt" and "create" are his. In actual

practice, the screen writer, in the great majority of cases, must so completely re-conceive his material in terms of the film medium that the creative quotient is extremely high. Often the content, by its nature, can only be satisfactorily transferred to the screen by what amounts to a new story with merely a thematic relationship to the original. It is true there are occasional assignments where the screen writer's work amounts to an adaptation, or more accurately, a collaboration with the original author—as in the case of a story by Steinbeck, who develops his material in the objective terms of dramatic continuity. But these are rare exceptions.

On the other hand the so-called original screen story is a sad and amorphous literary form. Since the studios regard them as unproved and highly suspect, these sporadic efforts are scarcely ever accepted as the basis of an important picture. Nor do most of them merit any better consideration. The writers are well aware of the low esteem (and low price) in which the studios hold "originals". Consequently, they turn them out with as little mental activity as possible, usually in the hope that some "gimmick" contained in the naked outline might bring them a quick buck at Republic or Monogram.

I have to admit that my own guild—The Screen Writers—observes Mr. Dickinson's distinction in this respect, by giving the "originals" two special classifications in their Academy Award list. Conscientious voters in these dubious categories are embarrassed to find themselves scraping the bottom of the barrel and usually settling for the lesser literary evil. As a minority in the matter, I have to voice my suspicion that the unspoken purpose of these fine distinctions is to increase the number of writers' Oscars. I am opposed equally to the method and the result. I see no added dignity accruing to screen writers or any other film maker by multiplicity of Oscars—a trend that is bringing the whole award system to the verge of the ridiculous. I think it will be a hopeful

indication of an improved status when the writers petition the Motion Picture Academy that only one writing award be given—for the best screen play—and I, for one, will not be concerned whether that screen play is based on material from a published work, an item from a newspaper, or an anecdote overheard in a barber shop.

I have still another objection to Mr. Dickinson's proposal—its effect in the field of criticism. An important feature in a writer's development in whatever medium he writes is a competent appraisal of his work. The Hollywood screen writer is practically sealed in a critical vacuum. Most of the local press conspires to maintain the illusion which the major studios seek to perpetuate—that a film is essentially a spontaneous phenomenon that happens somewhere along the production belt-line. For the most part, the reviews are not concerned with either dramatic substance or form, but rather an estimate of the superficial production values in terms of their box-office potentials (and even in this limited area they are far from infallible). They either ignore the writer, as in the *Hollywood Reporter*, or if the reviewer is in a generous mood after he has turned verbal handsprings over the star's hairdress and the executives' genius for concocting this scintillating entertainment, he sometimes tacks on the end of his column something like "The screen play was fortunately free of the usual clichés".

The New York newspaper critics are naturally more concerned with content and literary values. Their reviews are more cognizant of the writer's contribution, but if we can judge from their system of awards, they are not prepared to reverse the studio's heavily publicised position which renders the playwright no more than an auxiliary spoke in the big wheel of executive, star and director. From some future perspective, I feel certain it will seem like a strange phenomenon in the history of the cinema that, for a period, its leading critics assembled in New York to evaluate the contributions of stars, directors and producing companies without any recognition of the basic creative work on which the other rest. And a few offices down the hall of the same newspaper, the reverse process is taking place—the Drama Critics' Circle are granting their award to the author of the season's best play!

It is reported that one film critic, when faced with this anomaly, explained that he and his colleagues had no way of deciding what the screen writer's contribution was in contradistinction to the director's. But this is not insoluble. The Screen Writers' Guild or the individual writers would be glad to supply manuscripts of the films which the critics considered candidates for their award. In reading these scripts they might be astonished to find how much of what they saw and heard on the screen was previously recorded on those hundred and some sheets of typewritten paper. Only when the film critic addresses himself primarily to the creative source of the picture's content, will he shed all vestiges of press-agentry and attain the same dignity and importance as the theatre critic. From then on he will provide a powerful stimulus to the writer's custodianship over his own work.

In the meantime, serious playwrights in this country are taking the best available ways to ensure that the dramatic values of their work reach the screen in unified form. One of the most effective methods is for the writer to select assignments where he can work in close concert with producers like John Houseman, William Dozier, Buddy Adler, and Stanley Kramer—among those whom I have had an opportunity to observe—and with directors like William Wyler, Max Opuls, Mark Robson, Joseph Mankeiwicz, and Rudolf Maté—all of whom endeavour to centralise their production around its



No Sad Songs for Me, directed by Rudolf Maté for Columbia. Margaret Sullavan as Mary Scott and Natalie Wood as Polly, her daughter. The action of this scene takes place on their way home after Mary has learned from the doctor that she has incurable cancer. Polly senses something strange in her mother's manner, but has no idea of the cause. This fragment of Howard Koch's script takes place in the car.

150. CLOSE TWO SHOT IN CAR FAVOURING MARY. Mary's gaze seems to be drinking in every detail of the scene, as though she were seeing it for the first time.

POLLY (curiously): What are you looking at, Mother?

MARY (rousing herself to answer): The bridge and the river—it's very beautiful.

POLLY: But you see it every day.

MARY: I know, but—

She stops. There is no way she can explain that this time it is different—that from here on nothing will be taken for granted; each familiar scene will be perceived as though with a new depth of focus, and the daily impressions that we waste so carelessly will be stored and treasured.

POLLY (beginning to be anxious): Mother, do you feel all right?

MARY (smiles reassuringly): It's time for your music lesson. . . .



creative core and to fend off the intrusion of extraneous considerations. Sometimes these writer-producer-director combinations are formalised in independent production units, but in most cases they are improvised for the making of a single picture within the framework of a major studio.

Another method of achieving the same unity is that taken in Hollywood by such hardy souls as John Huston and Robert Rossen, whose films have been at the top of the American list in 1948* and 1949.† Both were writers for many years and both observed realistically that their screen plays were better than the films made from them. Overcoming by persistent struggle the traditional resistance of the studios to the emergence of writers from their prescribed limbo, they became what is known in Hollywood parlance as writer-directors, and functioned in this dual capacity with conspicuous success, as I have indicated above. I don't wish to assert that artistic self-defence was the only motive in their urge to direct, but it is safe to say that it was a prominent consideration.

Now Mr. Dickinson may contend that these two outstanding figures are in reality "filmwrights", and hence demonstrate his thesis. But I believe this would be an incorrect conclusion, since it would assume that other directors, who are not writers, could function as such either by themselves or, as previously stated, by attempting to devise their own "choreography", and then, almost as jobbers, sub-contract writers to deliver, when needed, so many lines of dialogue of a prescribed quality. This, I maintain, is an inversion of creative precedence.

When John Huston was preparing to direct *The Maltese*

* *The Treasure of Sierra Madre*—Huston.

† *All The King's Men*—Rossen.

Falcon, he showed me his shooting script. Practically every element of the action down to the smallest detail, whether visual or verbal, was anticipated in that screen play. Without diminishing his directorial talents, it seemed self-evident that Huston, the writer, had accomplished the basic creative work before Huston, the director, took over.

It must be clear by now that I am using Mr. Dickinson's controversial suggestion to illuminate the screen playwright's shadowy province. In the motion picture industry as it exists in this country, he is half its ghost and half its conscience. He is constantly prodding his managerial superiors to place more emphasis on ideas and content, less on names and formulae. And he has an increasing weight even of box-office evidence to support his point of view.

But business functionaries are traditionally wary of the creative mind and of investing it with authority, especially in such an effective medium of mass communication as the motion picture. Ideas are considered dangerous until they pass through the sterilising filters of established business and political policy. As I write this, ten Hollywood men are going to jail for no crime other than their refusal to submit their ideas to political censorship. Eight of these ten are script writers. Apparently the forces of suppression are under no illusions where to look for the basic source of ideas and attitudes projected in films.

Let us recognise it as well as they and thus dispel an ancient and confusing fiction. When we do, the motion picture will mature and all its collaborating talents will gain satisfaction and significance by the shift in emphasis from the gloss of its wrapping to the integrity of its content. For the *play* is the thing—and will always remain the thing—as long as man seeks to project his ideas in any dramatic form.



The Asphalt Jungle



Two reminders of "Les Charmes de l'existence".

SOMETHING TO DECLARE

John Maddison

PARODY HAS BEEN rather neglected by film-makers, surprisingly so in a medium in which last night's find may only too easily turn out to be this morning's cliché. The exceptions are mainly to be found among feature films, though one remembers gratefully the brief delight of the Canadian National Film Board's *Marching the Colours*. Yet, in a quiet way, documentary has long been ripe for what is after all a most astringent form of criticism. In France, Alain Gibaud, starting as an amateur using 16 mm. but now employing standard film, has turned his attention to this unworked field. With *Transport Urbain* he carries on the good work he began, not quite so successfully, with his other film, *Le Baton*.

Transport Urbain is a "slight case of murder": its victims are the foibles of certain expositional film-makers. All the less reputable mannerisms are firmly pinned to the album page; the general air of patronage and omniscience, the rather tired expert who talks at us from behind the same office table every time, and the limping redundancies on the soundtrack. The exposition, both aurally and visually, of how to get on to a tramcar is an extended example of what *Punch* used to call "a glimpse of the obvious". And there is an attempt, in the best traditional manner, to impart a little incidental drama to the educational texture by staging a head-on collision between two trams. The dénouement here is more light-hearted than traditional—a true screen "moment". *Transport*

Urbain will probably be shown this year at Edinburgh and, for that, will need an English commentary. It is to be hoped that Gibaud will not allow this to be undertaken by an irreverent hand. The subject is one that might draw the best out of, say, Osbert Lancaster—it is the ancient and always endearing tramways of the City of Versailles.

Jean Grémillon's and Pierre Kast's *Les charmes de l'existence* also represents a direction likely to interest any short film-makers anxious to tread new byways. Here they have given a fresh twist to what, not without irreverence, may be called the Emmer-Storck formula. For their material, Grémillon and Kast have gone to the "best" academic painters working between about 1860 and 1914: to be more precise, the canvases of all the Prix de Rome winners of the period. The imagery, picked out and transformed by Grémillon's sensitive eye, is often unexpectedly touching. Figures and landscapes are used to follow affectionately the Seven Ages of Man as these painters might collectively have seen them. The commentary is appropriately earnest and nostalgic, and music of the period has been chosen and arranged by Grémillon himself. To continue the game of thinking up the right people to provide us with English commentaries for these vintage French divertissements, this journey back into a day when "every picture told a story" might appeal to the evocative genius of John Betjeman. He would no doubt bring to it the right blend of sympathy and erudition.

DICKENS, GRIFFITH AND THE FILM TO-DAY (2)

S. M. Eisenstein

Eisenstein's last book, "Film Form", a collection of his miscellaneous writing over the last fifteen years, was published in America nearly two years ago. We are pleased to announce that Dennis Dobson Ltd. have acquired the rights for this country, and will publish the book at a later date. Meanwhile, Sight and Sound is serialising parts of it each month: in this issue we continue an important essay on Dickens and Griffith. The translation is by Jay Leyda.

BEFORE DISCLOSING what the steady gaze of the American film-maker may have caught sight of on Dickens's pages, I wish to recall what David Wark Griffith himself represented to us, the young Soviet film-makers of the 'twenties.

To say it simply and without equivocation: a revelation.

Try to remember our early days, in those first years of the October socialist revolution. The fires *At the Hearthsides* of our native film-producers had burnt out, the *Nava's Charms* of their productions had lost their power over us and, whispering through pale lips, "Forget the hearth", Khudoleyev and Runich, Polonsky and Maximov had departed to oblivion; Vera Kholodnaya to the grave; Mozhukhin and Lisenko to expatriation.

The young Soviet cinema was gathering the experience of revolutionary reality, of first experiments (Vertov), of first systematic ventures (Kuleshov), in preparation for that unprecedented explosion in the second half of the 'twenties when it was to become an independent, mature, original art, immediately gaining world recognition.

In those early days a tangle of the widest variety of films was projected on our screens. From out of this weird hash of old Russian films and new ones that attempted to maintain "traditions", and new films that could not yet be called Soviet, and foreign films that had been imported promiscuously, or brought down off dusty shelves—two main streams began to emerge.

On the one side there was the cinema of our neighbour, post-war Germany. Mysticism, decadence, dismal fantasy followed in the wake of the unsuccessful revolution of 1923, and the screen was quick to reflect this mood. *Nosferatu the Vampire*, *The Street*, the mysterious *Warning Shadows*, the mystic criminal *Dr. Mabuse the Gambler* reaching out towards us from our screens, achieved the limits of horror, showing us a future as an unrelieved night crowded with sinister shadows and crimes. . . .

The chaos of multiple exposures, of over-fluid dissolves, of split screens, was more characteristic of the later 'twenties (as in *Looping the Loop* or *Secrets of a Soul*), but earlier German films contained more than a hint of this tendency. In the over-use of these devices was also reflected the confusion and chaos of post-war Germany.

All these tendencies of mood and method had been foreshadowed in one of the earliest and most famous of these films, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920), this barbaric carnival of the destruction of the healthy human infancy of our art, this common grave for normal cinema origins, this combina-

tion of silent hysteria, particoloured canvases, daubed flats painted faces and the unnatural broken gestures and actions of monstrous chimaeras.

Expressionism left barely a trace on our cinema. This painted, hypnotic "St. Sebastian of Cinema" was too alien to the young, robust spirit and body of the rising class.

It is interesting that during those years inadequacies in the field of film technique played a positive role. They helped to restrain from a false step those whose enthusiasm might have pulled them in this dubious direction. Neither the dimensions of our studios, nor the lighting equipment, nor the materials available to us for make-up, costumes, or setting, gave us the possibility to heap onto the screen similar phantasmagoria. But it was chiefly another thing that held us back: our spirit urged us towards life—amidst the people, into the surging actuality of a regenerating country. Expression passed into the formative history of our cinema as a powerful factor—of repulsion.

There was the role of another film-factor that appeared, dashing along in such films as *The Grey Shadow*, *The House of Hate*, *The Mark of Zorro*. There was in these films a world, stirring and incomprehensible, but neither repulsive nor alien. On the contrary—it was captivating and attractive, in its own way engaging the attention of young and future film-makers, exactly as the young and future engineers of the time were attracted by the specimens of engineering techniques unknown to us, sent from that same unknown, distant land across the ocean.

What enthralled us was not only these films, it was also their possibilities. Just as it was the possibilities in a tractor to make collective cultivation a reality; it was the boundless temperament and tempo of the amazing (and amazingly useless!) works from an unknown country that led us to muse on the possibilities of a profound intelligent class-directed use of this wonderful tool.

The most thrilling figure against this background was Griffith, for it was in his works that the cinema made itself felt as more than an entertainment or pastime. The brilliant new methods of the American cinema were united in him with a profound emotion of story, with human acting, with laughter and tears, and all this was done with an astonishing ability to preserve all that gleam of a filmically dynamic holiday, which had been captured in *The Grey Shadow* and *The Mark of Zorro* and *The House of Hate*. That the cinema could be incomparably greater, and that this was to be the basic task of the budding Soviet cinema—these were sketched



for us in Griffith's creative work, and found ever new confirmation in his films.

Our heightened curiosity of those years in *construction and methods* swiftly discerned wherein lay the most powerful affective factors in this great American's films. This was in a hitherto unfamiliar province, bearing a name that was familiar to us, not in the field of art, but in that of engineering and electrical apparatus, first touching art in its most advanced section—cinematography. This province, this method, this principle of building and construction was *montage*.

This was the montage whose foundations had been laid by American film-culture, but whose full completed, conscious use and world recognition was established by our films. Montage, the rise of which will forever be linked with the name of Griffith. Montage, which played a most vital role in the creative work of Griffith and brought him his most glorious successes.

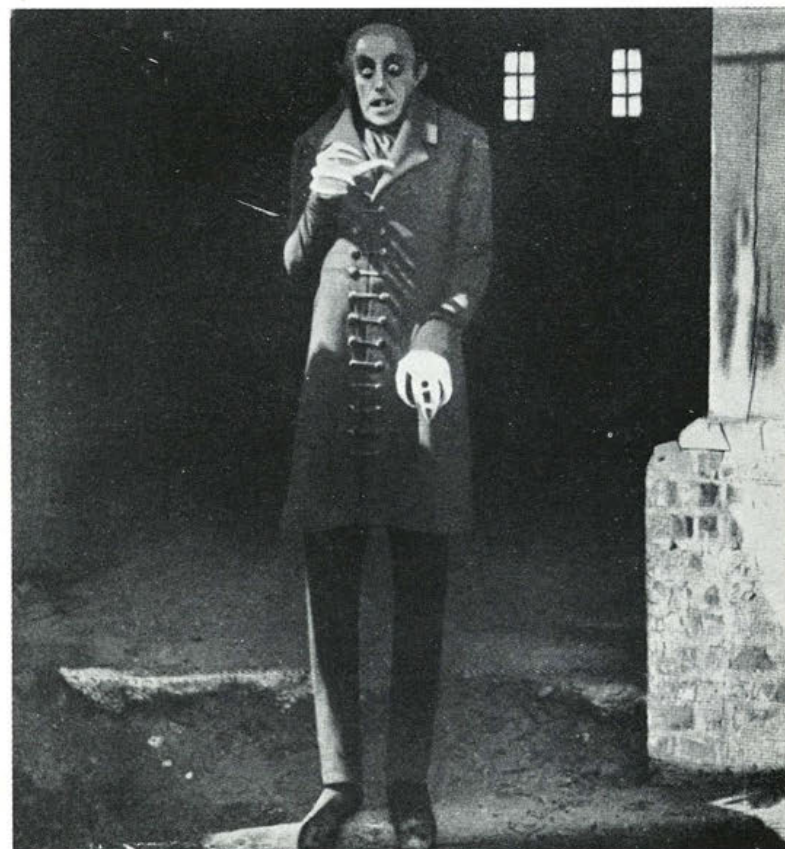
Griffith arrived at it through the method of parallel action. And, essentially, it was on this that he came to a standstill. But we mustn't run ahead. Let us examine the question of how montage came to Griffith or—how Griffith came to montage.

Griffith arrived at montage through the method of parallel action, and he was led to the idea of parallel action by—Dickens!

To this fact Griffith himself has testified, according to A. B. Walkley, in *The Times* of London, for April 26th, 1922, on the occasion of a visit by the director to London. Writes Mr. Walkley:

"He, Griffith, is a pioneer, by his own admission, rather than an inventor. That is to say, he has opened up new paths in Film Land, under the guidance of ideas supplied to him from outside. His best ideas, it appears, have come to him from Dickens, who has always been his favourite author. . . . Dickens inspired Mr. Griffith with an idea, and his employers (mere "business" men) were horrified at it; but, says Mr. Griffith, "I went home, re-read one of Dickens novels, and came back next day to tell them they could either make use of my idea or dismiss me".

"Mr. Griffith found the idea to which he clung thus heroically in Dickens. That was as luck would have it, for he might have



Impact of German and American cinema on Russia in the 20's.

Top left, Werner Krauss, Conrad Veidt in "Dr. Caligari"—"this barbaric carnival of the destruction of the healthy human infancy of our art, this common grave for normal cinema origins . . ."

Top right: Fairbanks and Anna May Wong in "The Thief of Bagdad"—"stirring and incomprehensible, but neither repulsive nor alien".

Above: "Nosferatu the Vampire"—"mysticism, decadence, dismal fantasy . . . the limits of horror".

found the same idea almost anywhere. Newton deduced the law of gravitation from the fall of an apple; but a pear or a plum would have done just as well. The idea is merely that of a "break" in the narrative, a shifting of the story from one group of characters to another group. People who write the long and crowded novels that Dickens did, especially when they are published in parts, find this practice a convenience. You will meet with it in Thackeray, George Eliot, Trollope, Meredith, Hardy and, I suppose, every other Victorian novelist. . . ."

Even a superficial acquaintance with the work of the great English novelist is enough to persuade one that Dickens may have given and did give to cinematography far more guidance than that which led to the montage of parallel action alone.

Dickens's nearness to the characteristics of cinema in method, style, and especially in viewpoint and exposition, is indeed amazing. And it may be that in the nature of exactly these characteristics, in their community for both Dickens and for cinema, there lies a portion of the secret of that mass success which they both, apart from themes and plots, brought and still bring to the particular quality of such exposition and such writing.

What were the novels of Dickens for his contemporaries, for his readers? There is one answer: they bore the same relation to them that the film bears to the same strata in our time. They compelled the reader to live with the same passions. They appealed to the same good and sentimental elements as does the film (at least on the surface); they alike shudder before vice, they alike mill the extraordinary, the unusual, the fantastic, from boring, prosaic and everyday existence. And they clothe this common and prosaic existence in their special vision.

Illumined by this light, refracted from the land of fiction back to life, this commonness took on a romantic air, and bored people were grateful to the author for giving them the countenances of potentially romantic figures.

Perhaps the secret lies in Dickens's (as well as the cinema's) creation of an extraordinary plasticity. The observation in the novels is extraordinary—as is their optical quality. The characters of Dickens are rounded with means as plastic and slightly exaggerated as are the screen heroes of to-day. The screen's heroes are engraved on the senses of the spectator with clearly visible traits, its villains are remembered by certain facial expressions, and all are saturated in the peculiar, slightly unnatural radiant gleam thrown over them by the screen.

It is absolutely thus that Dickens draws his characters—this is the faultlessly plastically grasped and pitilessly sharply sketched gallery of immortal Pickwicks, Dombey's, Fagins, Tackletons and others.

Just because it never occurred to his biographers to connect Dickens with the cinema, they provide us with unusually objective evidence, directly linking the importance of Dickens's observation with our medium.

Stefan Zweig has written in an essay on Dickens:

"This extraordinary optical faculty amounted to genius in Dickens. . . . His psychology began with the visible; he gained his insight into character by observation of the exterior—the most delicate and fine minutiae of the outward semblance, it is true, those utmost tenuousities which only the eyes that are rendered acute by a superlative imagination can perceive. Like the English philosophers, he does not begin with assumptions and suppositions, but with characteristics. . . . Through traits, he discloses types: Creakle had no voice but spoke in a whisper; the exertion cost him, or the conscious-

ness of talking in that feeble way, made his angry face much more angry, and his thick veins much thicker. Even as we read the description, the sense of terror the boys felt at the approach of this fiery blusterer becomes manifest in us as well. Uriah Heep's hands are damp and cold; we experience a loathing for the creature at the very outset, as though we were faced by a snake. Small things? External? Yes, but they are invariably such as to recoil upon the soul".

The visual images of Dickens are inseparable from aural images. The English philosopher and critic, George Henry Lewes, though puzzled as to its significance, recorded that "Dickens once declared to me that every word said by his characters was distinctly *heard* by him . . .".

We can see for ourselves that his descriptions offer not only absolute *accuracy of detail*, but also an absolutely *accurate drawing of the behaviour* and actions of his characters. And this is just as true for the most trifling details of behaviour—even gesture, as it is for the basic generalised characteristics of the image. Isn't this piece of description of Mr. Dombey's behaviour actually an exhaustive regisseur-actor directive?

"He had already laid his hand upon the bell-rope to convey his usual summons to Richards, when his eye fell upon a writing-desk, belonging to his deceased wife which had been taken, among other things, from the cabinet in her chamber. It was not the first time that his eye had lighted on it. He carried the key in his pocket; and he brought it to his table and opened it now—having previously locked the room door—with a well-accustomed hand".

Here the last phrase arrests one's attention: there is a certain awkwardness in its description. However, this "inserted" phrase: *having previously locked the room door*, "fitted in" as if recollected by the author in the middle of a later phrase, instead of being placed where it apparently should have been, in the consecutive order of the description, that is, before the words, *and he brought it to his table*, is found exactly at this spot for quite *unfortuitous* reasons.

In this deliberate "montage" displacement of the time-continuity of the description there is a brilliantly caught rendering of the *transient thievery* of the action, slipped between the preliminary action and the act of reading another's letter, carried out with that absolute "correctness" of gentlemanly dignity which Mr. Dombey knows how to give to any behaviour or action of his.

This very (montage) arrangement of the phrasing gives an exact direction to the "performer", so that in defining this decorous and confident opening of the writing-desk, he must "play" the closing and locking of the door with a hint of an entirely different shade of conduct. And it would be this "shading" in which would also be played the unfolding of the letter; but in this part of the "performance" Dickens makes the shading more precise, not only with a significant arrangement of words, but also with an exact description of characteristics.

"From beneath a heap of torn and cancelled scraps of paper, he took one letter that remained entire. Involuntarily holding his breath as he opened this document, and 'bating in the stealthy action something of his arrogant demeanour, he sat down, resting his head upon one hand, and read it through".

I don't believe I am wrong in lingering on this example, for one need only alter two or three of the character names and change Dickens's name to the name of the hero of my essay, in order to impure literally almost everything told here to the account of Griffith.

(To be continued)

THE ITALIAN STRAW HAT, 1927

Produced for Films Albatros, Paris. Script: René Clair, from the comedy by Eugene Labiche and Marc Michel. Direction: René Clair. Photography: Maurice Desfassiaux and Nicolas Roudakoff. Settings: Lazare Meerson. With Albert (the groom), Marise Maia (the bride), Olga Tschekowa (Mme. de Beauperthuis), Yvonneck (Nonacourt), Jim Gérald (Beauperthuis), Alice Tissot and Bondireff (The Cousins), Pré fils (Babin), Paul Olivier (Vesinet), Alex Allin (valet), Velbert (Mayor), Vital Geymond (the officer).



The purpose of this series of reviews is to look again at films which have come to be regarded as "classics" in the history of the cinema. Although what matters to us here is their intrinsic value as motion pictures, their importance historically speaking will also be kept in mind. In addition we shall give a summary of some past critical opinion on the film.

We hope this series of revaluations will be of use to film societies faced with the problem of preparing programme notes for their audiences as well as of interest to all readers who like old as well as new films.

The Italian Straw Hat established the maturity of René Clair as a film maker. Though the gay stage farce by Labiche and Michel on which the story is based is turned into a satire, a strong element of fantasy remains to lighten the attack on the social posturing of a foolish middle-class society and sweeten it with laughter which has no trace of bitterness. Successful satire is usually the mark of maturity in an artist, since he has to keep his sense of humour alive at the very moment when his desire to attack the evils of society is at its strongest. Clair's previous films, *Paris qui Dort*, *Entr'acte*, *Le Fantôme du Moulin Rouge*, *Le Voyage Imaginaire* and *La Proie du Vent* showed his versatility and, in some instances, his refined sense of visual humour (as in *Entr'acte* and *Paris qui Dort*). But *The Italian Straw Hat*, which also gained Clair a certain notoriety because some sections of society found its satire objectionable, will remain one of the permanent "classics" of the silent cinema.

Paul Rotha gave it high praise in *The Film Till Now* (1930):

"I certainly suggest that *Le Chapeau de Paille d'Italie* is the most brilliant satirical comedy produced in Europe to be grouped with Lubitsch's *The Marriage Circle* and Chaplin's *A Woman of Paris*". It is, he writes, "a brilliant comedy deep in bitter satire of French middle-class life, and realised with a high degree of intelligence and cinematic skill. Around a simple dual theme of a man who was a little hard of hearing

and the destruction of a lady's straw hat, Clair wove a film that was not only exceptionally witty, but a penetrating commentary on the pettiness and small-mindedness of the bourgeoisie who constitute such a large proportion of the French population".

Writing in 1932 in *Scrutiny of Cinema*, the late William Hunter says of the film:

"It is a superb study in general stupidity. It is thoroughly French in spirit, though by no means local in treatment. It is set in a dead and ridiculous epoch, but also in an epoch whose pettiness still survives and will never be wholly stifled. Clair's attitude is that of an intelligent and sensitive person, a critically satirical attitude, but human, tolerant, and without bitterness. He has pointed out futility by drawing attention to detail, he has satirised an epoch, and, still more, he has satirised the perennial and undying elements of that epoch and intensified the awareness of his audiences".

Bardèche and Brasillach make a further comment which many critics have endorsed. "Clair's realism", they say, "is . . . that of the ballet. He puts his characters in fancy dress and provides them with the appropriate accessories, but at the same time he stylises them, simplifies their outline and leads them into that world which is peculiarly his".

The Italian Straw Hat is made up of a succession of episodes linked together by the slender story of a young bridegroom



whose horse eats part of a married lady's straw hat while she is preoccupied with a lover behind a bush in the Bois de Vincennes. The incident might have been smoothed out with reasonable diplomacy, had not the bridegroom been on his way to his wedding and the young lady's safety been dependent on returning home with her hat, if not her honour, intact. Her lover is a fierce and foolish officer, intent only on revenge and immediate reparation. This pair pursue the bridegroom throughout his wedding and the subsequent celebrations. They loll about in his house and send him threatening messages by means of his terrified valet. He must replace the hat before they will consent to go. There is no other plot-link to the film except the coincidence that the deaf uncle of the bride, Mon. Vezinet, is discovered to have brought her the present of an Italian straw hat. This is given to the errant wife, the bride and groom are reconciled, and the deceived but suspicious husband is tricked into submission.

Clair has a happy time with this delightful situation, which provides the motivation for his incredible collection of 1895 bourgeois characters. The realism of the film lies in the settings and in the formalities of the wedding, in all those things people do to make them seem important and dignified in their own eyes. The bride's father is fat and self-opinionated, a provincial market-gardener in comfortable circumstances, stuffing his body into tight clothes and struggling with his boots. Everyone who arrives is kissed on both cheeks. A stupid bearded uncle, hen-pecked by his tall and pretentious wife, wears a made-up tie which constantly drops loose from his collar. This drives his wife to distraction and eventually provides the funniest scene in the film. The climax of the kissing formalities comes in a shot directly looking down upon the bald heads of the men and the monstrous feathered hats of the women, all dipping together in the movements of a mock ballet. All these social activities take place against the fussy backgrounds of the knick-knack nineties so ably assembled by the late Lazare Meerson, who was Clair's art director.

As a piece of story telling the film moves slowly enough, but it contains so much carefully contrived humour and is so well acted by the excellently chosen cast that it survives repeated viewings, at any rate so far as I am concerned. Clair learned from Chaplin, for whom he has the greatest admiration, the value of "building" and timing his visual gags, developing them under the scrutiny of the camera with a certain affectionate regard for their rich humour. The best of these gags, in my opinion, is the scene during the Mayor's oration after the civil wedding-ceremony. The bearded uncle's made-up tie slips once more from the socket of his collar. He is leaning forward intent on the Mayor's sentimental oratory: his wife delivers him a series of nudges, but he is too stupid to take the point; he moves along to give her more room, so starting a chain-movement until the man at the end of the row nearly falls off his seat, a time-honoured subsidiary gag. But the aunt's nudges grow in violence, and she grimaces and gestures to make him understand. He does nothing, but the infection has begun; the Mayor fingers his tie, so does his Deputy, so eventually does every man in the company, though the Mayor's oration still flows on. Eventually the aunt can bear it no more, and with a great French shoulder-shrug of exasperation, she herself shoves the



The tradition of social satire in Clair. A bourgeois idyll from "Les Deux Timides" (1928) and Maurice Chevalier as the silent film director in "Le silence est d'or" (1946).



Two shots from the climactic wedding scene in "The Italian Straw Hat".

offending tie violently back into place. With mild annoyance her husband sinks back into a listening posture. The Mayor's tedious oration never ceases.

All through the film episodes as carefully conceived as this are worked out with little need for captions or dialogue. That the film is both too slow and too long for popular entertainment I have no doubt, and the characters of the officer, the fainting wife and the bridegroom's sorrowful valet become repetitive and tedious. For it is the elderly folk who distinguish this film. They are comic types, no doubt, but wickedly apt and typical in their behaviour. The deceived

husband, standing upright and indignant in a footbath, still wearing a frock-coat but without any trousers, is perhaps the funniest portrait of all. While searching the bridegroom's apartments for his lost wife he is the image of stupid suspicion, looking behind doors where the lovers had been hiding only after he has given them every chance to escape. It is characters like these which give the film its final right to survive as one of the richest and most meticulously made comedies of the silent period of film-making, almost in fact, without equal, except for the best work of Chaplin and Lubitsch.

(Interview with Ophuls continued from page 194)

Universal-International, *Caught for Enterprise*, and finally *The Reckless Moment*, produced by Walter Wagner for Columbia, which attracted some attention in America and led to the project of *La Duchesse de Langeais*. I actually came to Paris to shoot this famous novel with Greta Garbo and James Mason. As nothing came of it, I finally got tired of drawing my salary in idleness and I enthusiastically seized the chance of filming another famous Schnitzler subject: *Der Reigen*, a favourite story of mine".

Max Ophuls took me out to the St. Maurice studio to show me the rough-cut of *La Ronde*. Not to overstate my case, I cautiously say that it seems to be a completely worthy successor to his best achievements. I didn't try to conceal my elation, but when we were sitting in the car again, I asked him, whether he had thought of censorship at all, American or English—when he was making the picture.

Of course he had not. It would have seemed to him a profanation of Schnitzler's work and spirit.

"Do you really think that the British censor would not pass those love scenes?" he enquired with a note of genuine anxiety in his voice. "That would be a blow to me, because little as I know it—I have a profound feeling for England.

If it weren't for the war, my son would have been educated in England, and possibly I might have made a film there. . . .

"I am delighted to be in Europe again" he continues, speaking of his plans. "It is my spiritual home, after all, and at my age it is almost impossible to become 100 per cent. American. I have a vague idea that I should turn to good use the proverbial American efficiency by making a few pictures over here which would reflect European spirit and European sensibility. Even in the States there is an ever-growing market for such films.

"Laurence Olivier has really broken new ground with his *Hamlet*. But I believe that, for instance, a film adaptation of Giraudoux's *La Folle de Chaillot*, in English of course, might well attract the same crowds . . .".

When Max Ophuls talks about something that is important to him, the inflexions of his voice betray a depth of feeling rather unusual in a man who by reason of his profession and after a life full of pitfalls might have become a cynic. Fortunately he is far from it. His faith in the cinema is unbroken; and his youthful enthusiasm still fires the imagination of his friends and fellow-workers who see in him not only an outstanding film-director, but also a good European.

Books: PERIODICALS SURVEY

THE CINEMA 1950, edited by Roger Manvell. (Pelican Books, 2/6.)

The Cinema 1950, first of a new series to appear annually, replaces the quarterly *Penguin Film Review*. In his introduction, Dr. Manvell quotes a jubilant obituary on its predecessor's demise in the *Daily Film Renter*: one is surprised at the trade paper's note of heated self-righteousness because the *Film Review* was not primarily controversial in approach. It stood in general terms for enlightened appreciation of the cinema, moderate in tone and infrequently salted with topical controversies. In *The Cinema 1950*, policy and presentation remain the same; but it has an advantage over its predecessor in that, while one prefers a quarterly publication to have an editorial impulse which directly informs and shapes the contents, an annual miscellany may legitimately be just that—and stand or fall by the merits of its individual contributions.

Most of these reach a good standard. The outstanding contribution is Robert Flaherty's, an anecdotal account of his adventures in film-making, with particular reference to *Nanook* and *Moana*—which contains, by the way, the melancholy news that all copies (and the negative) of the latter have been lost. There is an interesting symposium on *Queen of Spades* by Roger Manvell, Thorold Dickinson and Michael Bell, a valuable account by Ivor Montagu of his visit to a stereoscopic cinema in Moscow, and Basil Wright, faced with the almost impossible task of writing on "Experimenting with Films", does so with freshness and perception.

The expanded form of *The Cinema 1950* allows for many articles to be considerably longer than before—notably in the case of Kracauer's "National Types as Hollywood Presents Them", a promising thesis worked out with rather disappointing scrappiness. While the main point—relating these to current political conditions and prejudices—is generally established, in considering films only to diagnose social traits the writer ignores individuality and does not even distinguish between the serious and the routine work. At the other end of the scale, the "Personal Opinion" feature—Richard Winnington, Matthew Norgate, Dilys Powell, Hugh Ross Williamson, Philip Hope-Wallace and E. Arnot Robertson writing on the films they have most enjoyed during the year—illuminates separate characteristics. Williamson constructs a pretentious theological dream-world from *The Third Man*, but the others write with pleasant discursiveness—in the case of Winnington on *Bicycle Thieves*, with real feeling.

JAMES MORGAN.

BIOGRAFBLADET: International Edition. Edited by Henning Osterberg. (Inedalsgatan 23, Stockholm.)

Oscar Wilde once wrote of criticism that it "creates the intellectual atmosphere of the age" and also makes us cosmopolitan. Considering that the cinema is one of the few indications of an approach towards a "new culture" in contemporary life and letters, it is not surprising that film criticism alone is showing signs of raising our standards of appreciation in the arts to-day. An intellectual monthly of the calibre of *World Review* has, in fact, in a recent editorial, recognised the importance of *Sequence* amongst critical reviews now published in London.

England, with *Sight and Sound* also, is not solitary in this field. In France there was *La revue du cinéma* which, in spite of a recent edition devoted to the history of costume in the cinema, has made an unfortunate demise: in Italy, *Bianco e Nero* still flourishes under the editorship of Luigi Chiarini, and in California, that most informative review of film, radio and television, *Hollywood Quarterly*, maintains its independence.

Sweden also has produced a contribution to this renaissance in criticism, and recognising the limitations of her language has been generous enough to publish an international edition, with English summaries of all the articles and two introductory studies in English of the Swedish cinema in the 40's, one by a Swedish critic and one by Forsyth Hardy. *Biografbladet* is more lavishly produced than most of its contemporaries, and has a prolific offering of stills, from Sucksdorff's latest film to the American surrealist *Lot in Sodom*.

This issue tells us a good deal about the Swedish cinema at present. Alf Sjöberg (director of *Frenzy*) writes about his new film, *Bar en Mor* (*Just a Mother*), describing how he attempted to use in the first part of the film the same technique that Miller employed in *Death of a Salesman*—to isolate the individual, technically as well

as emotionally, so that the audience may more completely grasp his psychology. Sucksdorff writes about the difference between directing short films and feature films, in which he is now apparently becoming interested.

The opportunity thus given to those of us ignorant of what is happening in Stockholm is welcome. It will only be possible for us to establish lasting critical standards in cinema if we can continue to read what others write and think about films, and to develop cosmopolitan habits in our film-going.

JOHN FRANCIS LANE.

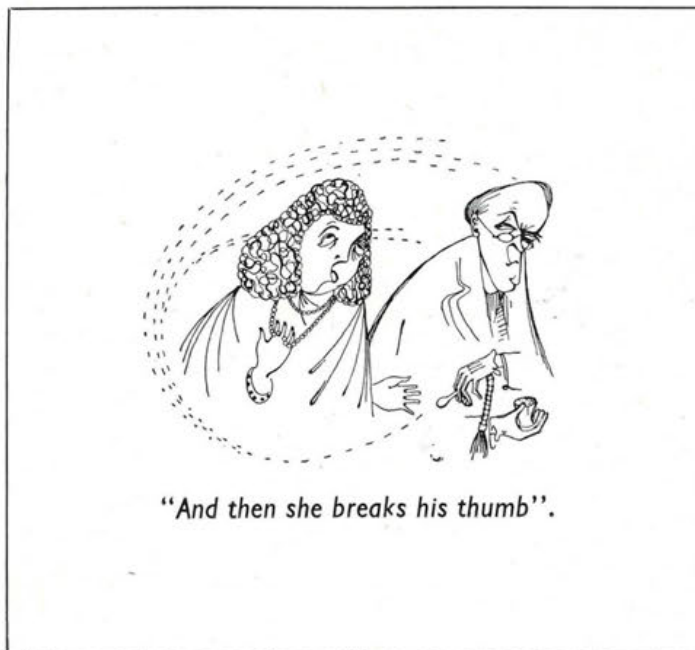
SEQUENCE. No. 11, Summer 1950. Edited by Lindsay Anderson and Peter Ericsson. (19 Hanover Terrace Mews, N.W.1.)

The most notable contribution to the new issue of *Sequence* is a long and important essay on the work of John Ford, written by Lindsay Anderson. Beginning with a sympathetic review of *They Were Expendable*, he acts in the spirit of the Browning quotation he so aptly chooses for introduction ("I took one thought this picture struck from me, And spread it out . . .") and embarks on a critical analysis of Ford's career. He illuminates research with critical insight and the result (whether one accepts individual comments or not) is wholly admirable. One of the causes of the low standard of film criticism in general is that critics seldom have (or give themselves) time to stand back from the day-to-day torrent of releases, to see a body of work whole and in perspective. The quarterly periodical is precisely the place where this kind of detached and therefore profounder analysis can be made and *Sequence* is performing a valuable service to criticism by publishing essays of this kind.

Gavin Lambert, in an article called *Sight and Sound* (could the title possibly have been suggested by a well-known magazine of the same name?) considers the techniques of the sound and silent film as exemplified in some well-known and recently-shown examples. The article has many significant observations (as where he stresses the tendency of the sound film to concentrate on narrative, incident, the diffusions of life) but somehow it does not in the end quite manage to crystallise. Perhaps the problem, as he puts it, of achieving a "poem" in the sound-film comparable to *Earth* or (it would not be my choice) *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, is insoluble until the film-makers have themselves solved it.

For the rest, the issue is well up to standard in its reviews of current films and film-books, its illustrations and (not least) its devastating quotations.

ERNEST LINDGREN.



"And then she breaks his thumb".

THE SOUND TRACK

Recent Recordings

ONCE A FILM has left the local cinema, it is often very difficult to recall the mood and atmosphere of a picture we particularly enjoyed seeing. Photographs and graphic descriptions cannot replace a film projector and a screen; films are too elusive. One possible and practical method of filing film memories is on gramophone records, which can be easily reproduced long after the films preserved in this way have become inaccessible. So far the range of recorded sound-track is very limited but certain interesting items have appeared; the three records taken from the sound-track of *Hamlet* are an excellent example of what can be done.

The story of the famous Carol Reed experiment from its enthusiastic and praiseworthy inception to its decadent finale as a music-hall joke is clearly told in the issue of no less than twelve records devoted to the matter. After the music of Anton Karas had been turned down by nearly every publisher in London and rejected out-of-hand by the gramophone companies, it was heard by Teddy Holmes, a well-known London publishing expert. He was the first to realise its potentialities and his firm (Chappells) published the theme tune. With some misgivings, the Decca Record Company issued a sound-track pressing of the "Harry Lime Theme" and the "Café Mozart Waltz", recorded direct from the picture. (Decca F.9235.) The amazing success of the music resulted in a remarkable boom in the sale of the record, which died out almost as soon as it had begun. By this time, however, the E.M.I. group had become aware of the possibilities of the music and they issued an ingenious imitation of the original Decca recording, made by the "Café Vienna Quartet". (Columbia DB.2611.) Then the craze started. The Harry Lime Theme soon appeared as a Foxtrot at the Hammersmith Palais (Columbia FB.3534), a Beguine (Parlophone R.3242) and as a song called "The Zither Melody", recorded by the Five Smith Brothers (Parlophone R.3266) and Reggie Goff (Decca F.9359). The next step came when the E.M.I. group realised that perhaps some of the other music in the film had commercial possibilities; they therefore issued a record of "That Dear Old Song" and "Casanova Melody", two other tunes not written by Anton Karas himself but incorporated into his score. (Columbia DB.2647.)

The phenomenal success of *The Third Man* music was soon repeated in Canada and in the United States, with the result that recordings made in America began to appear in the British catalogues. First came a record of the theme played by Alvino Ray on a guitar (Capitol 13240), followed by a guitar and orchestral version of the two principal tunes played by Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians. (Brunswick 04460.) An American recording by Ethel Smith on the electric organ was then made. (Brunswick 04480.) By now, the Harry Lime Theme was just a gag, epitomised by Max Miller and George Formby when they recorded "Come Hither With Your Zither". (H.M.V. B.9878 and Decca F.9356.)

This music was an excellent experiment in sound-track technique. It was designed, like the Warsaw Concerto, to make an immediate appeal. It has suffered the fate of becoming a craze in itself; it was eventually destroyed by the very thing that had given it life—its own infectiousness.

"Theme From The Prelude": *49th Parallel* (Ralph Vaughan Williams). Recorded by the London Symphony Orchestra

conducted by Muir Mathieson. (H.M.V. B.9879.)

It is nearly ten years since this music was composed for Michael Powell's production of an early war picture launched in 1940. The recording has only recently been issued and is a good example of the value of the gramophone record in recapturing at least something of the spirit of a film that has long since ceased to be shown generally.

The Vaughan Williams Prelude takes its thematic material from the quotation on which the picture was based: "Across the great North American continent there runs a line drawn not by bloodshed and strife, but by the common consent of the free peoples of two great countries. It is not a barrier—it is a meeting place. It is the '49th Parallel'—the longest undefended frontier in the world". This music was the composer's first contribution to the cinema and it is very difficult to account for the fact that it has taken ten years before a recording of the Prelude could be issued.

"Theme Music": *The Cure For Love* (William Alwyn). Recorded by the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Muir Mathieson. (H.M.V. B.9879.)

William Alwyn's music is so familiar to cinemagoers that it seems a pity to represent him on records by a rather ordinary march (*Desert Victory*), an amusing and pleasant piece of nonsense (Calypso Music from *The Rake's Progress*) and now a delightful but unpretentious waltz theme from *The Cure For Love*. What is needed is an extract from the last reel of *Odd Man Out*, the little boy's flight through the streets in *The Fallen Idol* or the vocal effects of the "More Money" theme from *The Rocking Horse Winner*. Alwyn's great contribution to the cinema has been in the field of drama; so far the record companies have only shown him as a martial expert, a rumba writer and a composer of 'boy-meets-girl' motifs.

JOHN HUNTLEY.

TELEVISION

ADVENTURE IN VISION, by John Swift. (John Lehmann, 15s., 1950).

NOW THAT TELEVISION is rapidly becoming a national entertainment, it is fitting that Mr. Swift should write this book, which will appeal both to the hardened viewer and the northerner who is soon likely to become one. The whole subject, due to its minimised public and the youth of its existence, has previously been neglected, but Mr. Swift's book has rectified this in a pleasant and informative manner. He has not attempted to lavish space on intricate descriptions of technical apparatus which would have baffled all but the electrical engineers, but has instead set down various unconnected anecdotes about the early pioneers—especially Baird, to whom he devotes several chapters. The advances made in America with electronic apparatus (which outmoded the Baird system, even in England) are given little space; but, as the author explains, the details which surrounded this change were complicated and difficult for the uninitiated to grasp.

The second half of the book is centred on a review of post-war productions of every kind. The author readily agrees that productions are only just emerging from the chrysalis stage, and that producers have not yet struck a satisfactory means of developing a television art form—because until very recently they have tended to be too preoccupied with the 'marvel' of television to take the medium artistically in hand. They have reached a stage comparable to the 1905-15 era of

the cinema, although future development is not likely to be similar: one does not foresee a Griffith descending upon the living-rooms with his own *Birth of a Nation*. The use of film in television is touched upon, especially in conjunction with studio-produced plays. Mr. Swift gives a cursory paragraph to the standard of entertainment films on television, and wisely does not attempt to excuse their depressing quality.

In the first half lies the importance of the book, for it is probably unique in being the only history of the medium yet to be published. It is a fascinating survey, and a revelation to those who, never having possessed a receiver, have never bothered to ask how television came to be. It would be interesting to stop half a dozen people in the street and ask them whether they knew that the B.B.C. was transmitting programmes before 1936. One imagines that very few could qualify this statement by memory alone. It is, however, a fact that these programmes were transmitted from 1929 until 1936 to an audience of amateur radio enthusiasts which grew to an estimated size of 10,000. The system used was the original 30-line Baird mechanical, and a set could be purchased for about £25. It was only with the perfection of ultra-short waves that the present electronic system could be put into operation and rapidly outmoded the Baird method when the two were tested side by side at Alexandra Palace in 1936. The original and heartbreaking trials made by Baird in 1920-25 are dwelt upon in some detail, however, because they were the first experiments to achieve any degree of success. Baird was competing in an international race with such men as Charles Jenkins in America and Belin in France. These are a few instances of the mass of facts and stories which Mr. Swift has compiled in a book which should be read also by enthusiasts of the cinema. It may provide food for thought.

JAMES CLARK.



"Hush, dear, look at the big doggie".

COMPETITION

Report on No. 3. Most of the entries were correct, though William Wyler was mistaken more than once for Clarence Brown, and Eisenstein for Pudovkin. The correct solution was: top, left to right—Renoir, Wyler, Lean: bottom, left to right—Eisenstein, Sturges, Disney. Book tokens have been sent to Mr. H. W. Weinstein, 142, Ivor Court, N.W.1 (25s.) and Mr. Michael Franklin, 35, Wellington Square, S.W.3. (10s. 6d.)

No. 5. Competitors are invited to write reviews (limit, 200 words) of *The Third Man*, *Letter from an Unknown Woman* or *On the Town* in the manner of any one of the following critics: Richard Winnington, C. A. Lejeune, Josh Billings, William Whitebait, Gavin Lambert. Only one critic and one film: satire welcomed. Closing date, July 26. Entries should be addressed to *Sight and Sound*, British Film Institute, 164 Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W.C.2, with "Competition" marked on top left-hand corner of envelope.

CONTRIBUTORS

JOHN GRIERSON. Producer, director, critic. Head of the G.P.O. Film Unit, 1933-37: Film Commissioner for Canada, 1939-45: Controller, Films Division, C.O.I. since 1948. Directed *Drifters*: produced *Song of Ceylon*, *Night Mail* and many documentaries. "Grierson on Documentary", collection of criticisms, published in 1946.

SIMON HARCOURT-SMITH. Author and critic. Film articles for various periodicals, including *Sight and Sound*.

JOHN HUNTLEY. Music publicist, researchist and lecturer. In music department of the Rank Organisation under Muir Mathieson, 1947-9: author of "British Film Music": now working at British Film Institute.

HOWARD KOCH. Playwright and screenwriter. Plays include "In Time to Come" (in collaboration with John Huston): scripts, *The Letter* (Wyler), *In This our Life* (Huston), *Casablanca* (Curtiz), *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (Ophuls), *No Sad Songs for Me* (Maté).

ROGER MANVELL. Author of *Film*, editor of *The Cinema 1950* (Pelicans): editor of National Cinema Series for Falcon Press. Director of the British Film Academy.

JEAN QUEVAL. Anglophile French writer, critic and lecturer on films. Has written a book on London, and recently on Jacques Becker.

KAREL REISZ. Working for the British Film Academy on the compilation of a book on film editing, with contributions by various British technicians.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Stills:

NATIONAL FILM LIBRARY for *Nosferatu*, *Thief of Bagdad*, *Caligari*, *Drifters*, *Man of Aran*, *Western Approaches*, *Children of the City*, *World of Plenty*, *Italian Straw Hat*, *Deux Timides*, *Silence est d'or*.

J. ARTHUR RANK ORGANISATION for *Great Expectations*, *Red Shoes*.

EALING STUDIOS for *Kind Hearts and Coronets*.

BRITISH LION FILM CORP. for *The Wooden Horse*.

WARNER BROS. for *Stage Fright*, *The Letter*.

COLUMBIA PICTURES for *The Reckless Moment*, *No Sad Songs for Me*.

R.K.O. RADIO for *Cinderella*.

METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER for *The Asphalt Jungle*.

FILMS DE FRANCE for *Orphee*.

STUDIO ONE for *Sans Lendemain*.

SACHA GORDINE for *La Ronde*.

STUDIO LIMOT for *Ballerina*.

LES FILMS GAUMONT for *Les enfants terribles*.

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**THE
BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE**

Summer Film School

at

**University College of North Wales
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August 15th-29th, 1950

A Seventh Annual Film Course, following the lines of those which have been so successful in past years, has been arranged for August of this year.

The Course covers the fundamentals of film technique and history, and should prove of great value both to students and intending film lecturers. The programme will include lectures by distinguished film makers and critics, and discussions: the evenings will be devoted to the showing of films. All afternoons and both Sundays are left as free periods.

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LONDON, W.1